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BRIDE OF GLORY



Bride of Glory



BEING THE STRANGE STORY OF EMY LYON, A BLACKSMITH'S
DAUGHTER, WHO MARRIED HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S
ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY

TO THE COURT OF NAPLES AND BECAME

Emma, Lady Hamilton

COMPANION OF ROYALTY AND THE TRUE FRIEND OF
VICE-ADMIRAL LORD NELSON, K.B., DUKE OF BRONTE

BY

BRADDA FIELD



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TO THE MEMORY OF

H. A. McC.

26th April, 1933

*But oft as Judge so faithful did prefer
The right before the expedient.*

HORACE, *The Odes*, iv, ix.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY THE
HONOURABLE CHARLES FRANCIS GREVILLE
TO
SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON, K.B.

“Emma’s passion is admiration, and it is not troublesome, because she is satisfied with a limited sphere, but is capable of aspiring to any line which would be celebrated, and it would be indifferent, when on that key, whether she was Lucretia or Sappho, or Scævola or Regulus; anything grand, masculine or feminine, she could take up, and if she took up the part of Scævola, she would be as much offended if she was told she was a woman as she would be, if she assumed Lucretia, she was told she was masculine.”



BRIDE OF GLORY



Book One

【JUNE 1780-MARCH 1786】



CHAPTER ONE

LITTLE clouds, like wisps of swansdown, floated slowly across the pale blue sky; a kite hovered over the mud flats on the Surrey side of the river; the brown sails of a hoy slid from concealment behind No. 14, Chatham Place, dipped under Blackfriars Bridge, and emerged before disappearing behind the last house in the row.

It was half-past five in the morning and the second day of June. Women, carrying on their heads baskets of fruit and vegetables, were coming up from the bridge, bringing produce from the market gardens of Lambeth to sell in the city. Waggons and carts rumbled past. Two men, trotting briskly, carried a swaying sedan-chair, reversed to show it was empty. Beggars, pedlars, sweeps and apprentices followed one another; an Italian in a tight velvet suit goaded with a cudgel the chained brown bear that ambled painfully before him.

Rain had fallen heavily on the previous night. In the gutter running down the centre of the pavement, and in sunken parts of the cobbled surface, water still lay, and formed mirrors that darkly reflected lazily moving clouds. Mud, pressed by heavy wheels, stood up in scalloped ridges and made necklaces around the street posts, splattered the window-panes and clung to iron railings.

At the third house from the river on the east side of Chatham Place, Emy Lyon, with graceful sweeping gestures, washed imprints of Dr. Budd's square-toed shoes and circular impressions of Mrs. Budd's pattens from the stone steps leading from the pathway to the frowning nail-studded door. On her right, protected by dumpy stone posts, another flight of steps descended to an area so narrow that light, filtering down to the barred kitchen window, was insufficient to penetrate to the cavernous fireplace at the farther side of the cellar. So muted was the daylight that Jane Farmer was often compelled to roast and fry with a candle in her hand, an encumbrance

which she asserted was the cause of the burnt and tallow-flavoured dishes served with such assurance and stately dignity.

Emy Lyon, having cleaned the last step, set aside the holystone, scrubbing-brush and clout, picked up the pail, and, with a dexterous swing, flung the dirty water towards the gutter. This accomplished, she inverted the pail, sat down upon it, and leant comfortably against the railings dividing the steps of Dr. Budd's residence from the steps of Mrs. Tarraway's lodging-house next door.

Beneath a hessian apron was the same pink cotton frock Emy had worn at school and at her first situation as nurse-maid to the children of Dr. John Thomas at Hawarden in Flintshire; it was new on Emy's thirteenth birthday, now she was fifteen and as mature in figure as many girls of twenty. The waist-gathers had been released, a false hem elongated the skirt, but the childish tight bodice refused to be adapted to Emy's swelling bosom and gaped brazenly beneath the kerchief Mrs. Budd obliged her to wear hanging from her neck. Emy had no money to rectify deficiencies; and her mistress, the careful only child of the wealthy merchant Stabler, was unwilling to pay a quarter's wages before they were due. Had it not been for Dr. Budd's objection to the ineffective kerchief, Emy must have remained immodest until the first day of August.

"Woman," the doctor thundered at his frugal spouse, "you might as well tie a red flag round the girl's neck and be done with it. Do you want folks in London to think we keep a stew? What'll our neighbours say of us for sending Henry and little Richard for walks past the Bridewell in charge of a wench whose bosom is as naked as those of the whores beating hemp on t'other side of the wall?"

Mrs. Budd, a pock-marked woman with thin shrewish lips, applied a vinaigrette to her nostrils as a counter-irritant against the robust speech.

"If I advance Emy her wages, how do you know she'll come back to earn them? The girl's got a cast in her eye, and that's a certain sign of shifty character."

"Nothing of the sort," the doctor snorted, "the small patch of brown pigmentation which extends from the iris of the left eye cannot be regarded by rational persons as a blemish to character."

"Perhaps you'd like to give the chit a month's wages from your own pocket?" Mrs. Budd acidly suggested.

"I will, and a day's holiday into the bargain. She'll enjoy the shop windows, after the wilds of Wales."

Conflicting emotions disturbed Mrs. Budd. She disliked her husband's interest in Emy, but she was pleased to be saved money. "The girl gets nine shillings a month—servants are paid higher in London than in Berkshire. Just to think, two months ago in Newbury I was giving eight shillings a month to a good cook."

"In London, Madam, you have no cook at all. If you keep Jane Farmer much longer I'll be a patient in St. Bartholomew's, and not the hospital's physician."

Emy, ignorant of the dissension which had procured good fortune, sat unconcernedly enjoying the bustle of the sunny street. Suddenly an expression of fear crossed her lovely face, her eyes widened with apprehension, her beautiful red mouth opened distractedly as with a hurried gesture she slipped her fingers inside her worsted stocking. Relief was manifested in her speaking face; she shook the contents of a paper packet into her lap. There fell out, glinting in the sunshine, three Queen Anne shillings, two George I sixpences, a florin stamped with the heavy profile of the second George, and twelve fourpenny pieces of good Farmer George. Never before had Emy possessed so much wealth. Picking up each coin, she studied the royal head, until it occurred to her they would look pretty arranged together in a heart-shaped pattern on the pavement, with the King at the top, to show how much she honoured him. It took several minutes to form a design to her liking, and she became oblivious to happenings around her until she was startled by a shadow and a whining voice. Emy looked up into the bold, ravaged face of a young woman who wore tatters of squalid finery.

"What a lot of money you've got, my pretty baggage!—enough to keep a poor doxy like me until luck changed. Not a bite nor sup has crossed my lips these two days, so help me Gawd. They've used me cruelly, my ducky: three floggings in eight days, until my flesh was torn and bleeding. Look at my hands!" She thrust reddened and blistered palms into Emy's face. "Hemp—beating that blasted hemp!" Her voice was heavy and venomous. "You be careful, my beautiful poppet; don't be ready to oblige the gentlemen, or you'll soon find yourself beating hemp in the clink along with other poor females. Oh, Christ!" she moaned; "if I had all that money I'd quit this heartless town and go back to my dear old mother in the country."

The woman's garments gave off a foul, damp odour, a rank miasma which seemed to sublimate from her fevered personality. Emy hastily picked up the coins and held them tightly. Bewildered and dismayed,

she tried to edge away, but the pail was jammed against the iron railing.

"Indeed I'll give you a sixpence, poor woman; but I can't spare more. 'Tis all I've got to bless myself with, and I've to make it buy two gownds, two shifts and a petticoat." Selecting the brightest coin, Emy dropped it into the woman's scarred palm.

"A sye-buck's no good to me, you mean young varmint."

Eagerly Emy added her second sixpence, and was rewarded by a sharp clout on her ear. In self-protection she raised her clenched fist. Her wrist was caught, her arm bent back, and so exquisite was the pain that her fingers released their hold and her money dropped into the hand waiting to receive it.

Laughing, the woman turned and began rapidly to walk up the square towards the city.

Emy leapt to her feet, and the strength and height of her lovely body became apparent. No longer was she a sweet, beautiful child; she had changed into a wild, vengeful force. Her cheeks flamed, her eyes sparkled, her teeth caught the lower lip of her vivid, bow-shaped mouth. With lithe, silent steps she overtook her enemy, and with a pounce caught her by the wrist and throat. As Emy dug her fingers into the scrofulous neck, triumphant exultation swept over her. She made no sound, but her eyes sparkled and the brown mark on her left eye, to which Mrs. Budd took exception, seemed to expand and darken. Pressing downward with all her strength, Emy forced her victim to her knees.

The woman coughed and choked, her face assumed a mottled purple hue slightly alarming to Emy, who, relinquishing her strangling grip, changed the punishment to hard slaps, administered partly with restorative intent.

"I'll pay you for thinking you could rob me. Mind this: nobody can get the better of Emy Lyon! I'm civil and obliging to everybody, but I spare none that treats me ill."

Using her nails, she attempted to tear her money from the woman's grasp, and was touching the edge of a coin, when a heavy hand fell on her shoulder, and a deep voice said: "Shame on you, a great powerful wench, for belabouring a feeble creature unable to defend herself."

Emy turned furiously. "Indeed she's no feeble creature, but the wickedest cheat you ever saw. She was strong enough to twist my

wages from my hand when I was making her a present as kind as possible."

The tradesman, middle-aged and burly, wore a brown grogam coat, black silk waistcoat, corduroy small-clothes, black worsted stockings and stout leather shoes with buckles. His wig was of the style known as a Dark Major, his hat three-cornered, and decorated with a large blue cockade.

Easily he dragged Emy away and raised the woman to her feet. Both amazons looked the worse for the encounter. Emy's bodice had entirely given up the attempt to encompass her vigorous body, the cotton had split under the arms, the kerchief supplied by Mrs. Budd lay muddled on the pavement. Her arms were scratched, her cap was off, her auburn hair was uncoiled and fell in a heavy rope almost to her feet.

She became aware of a number of people, spectators who, having taken sides, shouted blame or encouragement. Her spirits rose—she'd show them. . . .

Tossing her head, she shook her hair about her, a mantle of golden chestnut. Then she smiled. There was no guile in Emy's smile, it was artless and confiding, full of mischief, infectiously gay. She had the satisfaction of seeing her audience reflect her own enjoyment, and decided it was the prettiest sight. . . . Such a number of admiring friendly faces. . . .

Emboldened by success, she kissed her fingers to them, choosing so to salute the poorest and ugliest. Murmurs of approval greeted her. A girl carrying cornflowers to sell ran forward and tucked a bunch into Emy's bosom; an old beggar woman lifted a vivid tress and with a blessing pressed it to her lips. Tears filled Emy's eyes and rolled down her cheeks. The people were the kindest she had ever met, and how she loved them! . . .

While Emy dominated her little stage, the woman who had been the cause of drama took the opportunity to slink away, hugging the railings until she reached the first of the large houses, which, projecting across the northern end of the square, hid her from view. Her absence was first noticed by the burly tradesman, who, discomfited by the adverse tide of public opinion, stood outside the bewitched circle.

"Well, my girl, the young woman's gone, and if you've spoken truth, your wages have gone with her." His voice carried the satisfaction of one privileged to witness just retribution.

"Oh, you wicked old man to let her go! You're nothing better than a common thief yourself, to come interfering with a girl fighting for her own. If you'd left me be I'd have gotten back my wages." Clenching her hands, Emy confronted him with a vivid face expressive of rage and contempt. "What will I do? This day I was to buy two gownds, two shifts and a petticoat, because I wasn't clad fit for a gentleman's house, and now, thanks to you, I'm robbed and tattery and what's to become of me God only knows!"

With pliant grace, Emy subsided on the pavement and wept. Sympathetic murmurs came from spectators; a cripple shook a withered fist and hoped the devil would blast all tyrants and oppressors. Embarrassed, the tradesman appeared about to speak, thought better of it, and sheepishly fingered his purse.

Representatives of all trades augmented the crowd: a mercer dressed in black with a white tie-wig, white silk stockings, muslin ruffles and japanned pumps; a white-garbed baker; a water-man in a petticoat and woollen jersey; respectable merchants in brown program coats and grizzled brigadier wigs; butchers in blue coats and aprons; carpenters wearing brown-paper caps and white aprons looped up at the side; a shoemaker in a short leather apron and a blacksmith in a long one; tapsters, porters, barbers and printers, each identified by his apron or his dress, each identical, in that he wore a blue cockade somewhere about his person.

In the quiet purlieus of Chatham Place such a concourse, so curiously agreed as to ornament, almost distracted Emy from her troubles. But not quite; her torn, bedraggled gown was a reminder. Casting another furious glance at the cause of her predicament, she rose to her feet and ran towards the house of Dr. Budd. She wouldn't be a raree-show for a lot of gaping men, that she wouldn't! . . .

Her audience broke up; beggars and street vendors turned their faces to the city, men wearing blue cockades converged and marched together down Chatham Place to Blackfriars Bridge.

On reaching the familiar steps to No. 3, Emy felt a touch and turned round. The tradesman again confronted her, this time holding a ten-shilling piece in his palm.

"I don't wish to think of you suffering through any fault of mine. Here are your wages, and a shilling interest to pay for your drubbing."

Emy stared him up and down. "*Duwch!* What do you take me

for? Helping to rob me one minute, trying to bribe me the next! I'll have none of your charity, and by God I had no drubbing."

He looked astonished and uncomfortable. "You'd best take it—for the clothes you need."

"I'll go in rags," Emy imperiously responded, "I don't care; but I'll pay you for insulting me if you go on holding out that money."

The half-sovereign still lay in his hand. For a moment longer Emy regarded the coin, then, very deliberately, she flicked it with her finger. Glittering, it flew through the air, to fall with a tiny splash into the gutter.

Nonplussed and stuttering, the tradesman harangued her for ingratitude. Maintaining an impervious demeanour, Emy sat down again on the inverted pail, while her eyes followed with lively interest the spirited movements of a black horse harnessed to a red-wheeled dark-blue phaeton that had turned the corner from William Street. A dirty ostler from the livery stables drove this stylish carriage, which was accompanied by two enormous footmen in white wigs, scarlet coats, canary-yellow waistcoats, white breeches and stockings, who distributed handbills as they ran. Having witnessed the ceremony for four successive mornings, Emy had become familiar with the bills, and was prepared for the tradesman's exclamation of astonishment when he read:

"If there be one human being, rich or poor, male or female in or near this great metropolis of the world, who has not had the good fortune and the happiness of hearing of the celebrated lecture, and of seeing the GRAND CELESTIAL STATE BED, and the MAGNIFICENT ELECTRICAL APPARATUS, and the supremely brilliant and unique decorations of this enchanting Elysian Palace! where wit and mirth, love and beauty—all that can delight the soul, and all that can ravish the senses, will hold their court, this, and every evening this week in chaste and joyous assemblage! let them now come forth, or for ever afterwards let them blame themselves, and bewail their irremediable misfortune."

"God bless my soul!" cried the astonished citizen. "I've learnt more this morning than in all the rest of my life."

"Indeed it pays to rise early." Having recovered from her ill-humour, Emy was eager to efface the memory of it from the mind of her adversary.

"The sins of London are worse than I believed. If you don't quickly mend your ways, young woman, I prophesy you'll die in misery and want."

"Should you be thinking of the lost money, 'twill do good in the end," Emy comforted. "Many poor people come this way from Lock's Fields, among them an old gamma who collects dust or what you will give her. If I see her I'll tell her to search the gutter. You'd be glad to make her happy, I'm sure, for, my God how ugly she is! She looks two ways for Sunday!"

Grunting angrily, the man turned on his heel and stumped towards the bridge. "Abandoned gull!" he shouted over his shoulder.

More and more men wearing blue cockades streamed through the opening at the north end of Chatham Place. At the bridgehead a couple of sailors, having constituted themselves stewards, marshalled the crowd into some kind of order. Early workers, artisans, and itinerant traders, bound for the City, had to fight their way through the throng. Only the black horse, drawing the glittering blue phaeton, managed to keep a clear space for himself. As he pranced up the square, Emy was able to read a placard on the back of the carriage which announced in large red letters:

"Doctor James Graham will lecture this night at the TEMPLE OF HEALTH, Adelphi, on the whole art of living with health, honour and happiness in this world, for at least a hundred years."

A church clock struck six, Miss Mary Mudge's time for unbolting the front door of No. 4 preparatory to emerging with pail and clout for the cleansing of Mrs. Tarroway's flight of steps.

"'Tis a fine morning!" Emy announced.

Kneeling on the steps, Miss Mudge ran her nose along the back of her hand before she grudgingly answered: "For a wonder!"

"How soon will you be ready to start?"

"When I've done!"

Recognizing that Mary was in one of her moods, Emy silently watched her fish from the pail a dripping piece of hairy coco-nut husk. Stretching her hand across the empty shell, Mary applied the harsh fibre to the stone, producing a rasping sound which seemed to appease her temper. She looked down at Emy seated below, and in more conciliatory tones inquired: "Who knocked at your area door long past midnight?"

"Jane went to the playhouse secretly and got caught in the storm. I was to let her in when she drummed on the window, but I fell asleep and she had trouble to rouse me."

"Pity the watch didn't catch her, trapesing about the town when all respectable females are in their beds!"

Mary dragged the pail along the step; it gave a shrill, vindictive screech, as if endorsing her sentiments.

"Jane means to be a play-actress herself, and how can she learn but by copying others? Last night after she came in she acted a little piece about a lady named Macbeth who'd helped to do a murder and thought her hands were still bloody. So frighteningly did she act that I couldn't sleep till cock crow."

"The brazen hussy! And then lying abed while you do her work. If I was nurse-maid I wouldn't do kitchen tasks!"

"'Tis no trouble, and I gain an hour to watch what's going on. People coming from the bridge speak to me as pleasant as possible, then the lovely black horse, the fine turnout, and the running footmen make as grand a sight as ever I saw. The doctor himself, coming down the steps in his rich clothes, looks splendid as a play-actor!"

"You've caught his eye," Mary grudgingly acknowledged. "Last evening, when I brought his candle, he asked who was the young beauty what sat outside in the early mornings singing like a lark. I said you didn't sing."

"But I do," Emy indignantly retorted. "Yesterday when he was getting into his carriage I sang:

*"Oh, had my love ne'er smiled on me,
I ne'er had known such anguish;
But think how false, how cruel she,
To bid me cease to languish;
To bid me hope. . . ."*

"Stop your squalling; you'll wake the gentry and get us both into trouble."

Surprised and mortified, Emy gazed at her friend. "Don't you like it? Jane heard the song at Covent Garden Theatre, and I had her teach it to me because I think it the prettiest thing . . ."

"To sing to a gentleman quitting his lodgings? You don't know how to behave, and I'm in two minds if I'll take you to buy your gownds, a shameless wench who acts no better than a tavern ballad-singer! If 'twasn't that your bursting clothes disgrace all modest

females, I declare I wouldn't go shopping with you—no, not even if you was to offer me a fortune!”

As Emy listened, so waned her intention to tell of her stolen wages. Anything might happen. . . . A purse of gold drop at her feet. . . . A parcel of cotton dresses come from her mother. . . . In an uncertain world 'twould be foolish hastily to confess misfortune. . . .

Her lovely eyes followed Mary, who, despite elaborate paraphernalia, was making but an indifferent job of the adjoining steps and allowed dirty water to trickle under the railings to sully the immaculate whiteness of her friend's handiwork. Emy felt indulgent and pitiful; poor Mary, who felt so superior. . . .

Miss Mudge reached the last step and painfully knelt upon the kidney-stones. A strand of oily black hair unwound itself and fell down her back; her bodice and skirt gaped apart, showing the knotted laces and greasy dark surface of her leather stays. Her skirt, looped beneath a hessian apron, exposed the grime of a quilted camlet petticoat interlined with wool, and therefore unwashable. Her face and figure were as unprepossessing as her clothes. Sallow skin stretched tightly over a pointed nose and high cheek-bones produced shiny areas on dull and flabby flesh. A wide upper lip never quite closed over prominent teeth which bit into the lower and imparted a sharp, canine expression to her face. Small, nondescript eyes, a high forehead and a receding chin completed a physiognomy remarkable neither for intelligence nor stupidity. Her body was tall, angular and flat-chested, her waist wide as her hips, her arms and shanks thin as drumsticks. Yet, despite her lack of comeliness, she was courted by a young man pale as herself, apprenticed to a cabinet-maker in Cheapside.

“Will your sweetheart come with us?” Emy inquired.

“I wouldn't venture in the streets without him—no, not if you was to ask me on your bended knees,” Miss Mudge emphatically responded.

“If a maid can't go walking alone in London Town, what shall I do who have no darling?”

Scorn and envy intermingled in the glance cast by Mary. “You're bold enough to walk at dead of night through Billingsgate, but whether you'd come back with your life *and* your virtue, is more than I'd care to promise.”

The sound of an opening window made the girls look up. They saw the shapely large hand of Dr. Graham beckoning for his car-

riage. The window was closed immediately and the curtain dropped, but the incident left Emy agog. Standing up, she tried to make her dress meet, failed, and, to hide the gap, crossed her hands demurely on her bosom.

Mary, who had opportunities of studying the mysterious doctor under prosaic conditions, displayed no excitement at the prospect of seeing him again; indeed, she was preparing to empty her pail into the gutter when the front door opened and he stepped out upon the flight of newly whitened steps.

Dr. Graham exceeded middle height and was inclined to corpulence; his tightly girt breeches acted as a stricture round his loins, above which swelled a prosperous protuberance of person. He was broad-shouldered, erect, self-confident and richly dressed in sober black. Although hardly more than thirty-five, his full, handsome face was set and serious. Thick brows overhung dark, penetrating eyes, his large shapely nose widened at the nostrils, his mouth was straight, thin-lipped and slightly pursed at the corners.

From his eminence on the top of the steps he looked down at Emy. Their eyes met. She smiled, but receiving no friendly glance in response, half turned and pulled a mocking face.

Equally impervious to blandishments or derision, he continued to stare as he descended to the pavement. Waiting while his footmen cleared a passage for his horse, he addressed Emy in a voice too low for Mary to hear.

"What do you earn at your present work?"

"Five pound eight shillings a year," she answered proudly. "In my last situation I got only three pound ten and my keep."

The horse forged through the throng and stood pawing the cobblestones. Climbing into the phaeton, the doctor took the reins, and then leant over to Emy. "Would you like to serve me for three pounds a month?"

Emy only had time to nod enthusiastically before the ostler skipped aside and the horse sprang forward, scattering the crowd. Dr. Graham's brilliant eyes flashed over the scene; comprehensively, indifferently, he assessed it. Then, with great composure, he started to manœuvre through the throng.

Mary, returning from the gutter, swung the empty wooden pail by its rope handle until the coco-nut husk rolled around inside with a lipping sound.

"Did he speak to you?"

"Yes—asked me how I did."

"He's given Mrs. Tarraway a bottle of Elixir of Life, and she declares she feels twenty years younger."

"She might," Emy answered guardedly.

Both girls watched Dr. Graham's elegant phaeton as it rolled up the Place. On either side ran the tall liveried footmen, their white-silk calves twinkling in the sunlight. As they ran, so they distributed hand-bills printed in similar bold scarlet letters to those on the placard attached to the carriage. Above the placard lay the black folds of the leather calash, above that showed Dr. Graham's expensive white wig and black hat, gently swaying to the movements of his costly vehicle.

"Looks as if he were doing better business than your Dr. Budd," Mary remarked.

"They've both got gold-headed canes," Emy retorted.

"You are a simpleton—that's the doctor's sign, like the basin a barber carries."

Emy felt crushed. "Are you going in now?" she asked hopefully.

The question arrested Mary's descent into the area, and she thrust her sallow face between the railings: "I'll be ready by noon, don't keep me waiting."

"Oh, no," Emy answered agreeably. Already her thoughts had strayed far from her friend and floated hither and thither waywardly as the gossamer clouds above her head.

Men still crowded through Chatham Place: butchers, bakers, carpenters, and barbers; porters and shoe-blacks; tradesmen and sweeps, all wearing blue cockades, all crossing the river to a rendezvous on the Surrey shore.

Through the kitchen window of No. 3 came the clattering of fire irons and the voice of Jane Farmer sonorously declaiming:

*"Who then shall blame
His pester'd senses to recoil and start,
When all that is within him does condemn
Itself for being there /"*



CHAPTER TWO

BECAUSE Mary knew a shopkeeper near the Monument who sold dimity and calico for half the prices asked in Cheapside, Emy found herself walking along Thames Street instead of a hoped-for fashionable quarter.

Handsome mansions of aldermen and merchants faced warehouses, small dwellings, wharves, taverns and innumerable passages sloping to the river. It was the busiest time of day; groups of men transacted business in the street; over the uneven cobblestones porters dragged trollies of cheeses, fish, salt and barrels of wine. A mercer wearing a tie-wig, fine black clothes, lace ruffles and white silk stockings minced on buckled, high-heeled shoes ahead of two apprentices carrying bales of Italian silks and Geneva velvets just unloaded at Paul's Wharf.

Emy enjoyed the bustle, but Mary clung with both hands to Ephraim Gibson, a stocky, ginger-haired, puffy-faced youth.

He wriggled sulkily. "For goodness' sake, walk by yourself, do, and let a fellow alone. 'Tis too hot for cuddling."

"I dursen't let go of you, Ephra, I dursen't really. You aren't a female, so don't know the tremors I suffer walking among the stronger sex without another sensitive creature to give me confidence."

"What's amiss with your friend?" Ephraim ogled Emy in a lumpish way.

Mary tossed her head. "Emy's a country girl without refinement or proper feelings."

Emy bridled. "You're bold to say that of me, Mary Mudge, when well you know I'm familiar with better things than you've ever seen. If you were asked to bring a decanter to a gentleman's table, you'd not know what to look for!"

Though at a disadvantage, Mary answered stoutly: "It doesn't signify!"

"Not if you're content to work in a lodging-house! I shall serve the nobility," Emy boasted. "After I've gotten experience with Mrs. Budd, my mother'll get me a place in the Countess of Warwick's nurseries; 'twill be easy, because My Lady bore a second son in April."

Ephraim did not conceal his admiration for Emy. His small green eyes nearly popped out of his head, and he walked sideways like a crab in order to watch her. Grasping his arm more firmly, Mary used her elbow to thrust Emy from sight. The manœuvre failing, she muttered:

"I don't want any more of your Warwickses; I never heard of them before, and I don't believe in them now."

Emy answered equably: "I'm telling Ephra, not you, and 'tis certain he's interested."

On approaching the Church of St. Magnus they beheld a large concourse marching six abreast from London Bridge. Every man wore a blue cockade identical with those Emy had seen early in the morning; some carried banners, others were armed with sticks and home-made clubs. The marching column emitted a continuous sound, deep and threatening as the growl of a tiger.

It was difficult to enter Fish Street. The Monument was the centre of a dense crowd, cheering and gazing at a young man speaking from the plinth. He was tall, slim, of wild appearance and eccentric of gesture. His stained and creased green riding-coat looked as if he had slept in it under a hedge; his boots were muddy and he lacked a cravat. Most of the powder had fallen from his hair, which lay in untidy strands on his shoulders; a cockade of enormous proportions adorned his hat.

"Have we forgotten the past?" he demanded. "Nay, for this monument, erected to commemorate the burning and rebuilding of the City after the Great Fire, is here to remind us." Turning to the inscription he read aloud: "'This pillar was set up in perpetual remembrance of the most dreadful burning of this Protestant City begun and carried on by ye treachery and malice of ye Popish factio, in ye beginning of Setem in ye year of our Lord 1666 in order to ye carrying on of their horrid plott for extirpating the Protestant religion and old English liberty, and the introducing of Popery and slavery.'"

"Unless the iniquitous Catholic Relief Act of 1778 be repealed, what the Papists did in 1666 they will do again in 1780. For, mark you!

any toleration shown to Papists now means an exchange of freedom for slavery, cruelty and oppression, under the Papal yoke.

"A hundred thousand strong, we march this day to Westminster, every one of us prepared to die rather than submit."

Silence fell. Scanning with fanatical eyes the listening crowd, the young man suddenly cried: "Who follows me to the House of Commons to strike a blow for liberty and religion?"

A great shout rang out: "No Popery! No Popery! Lord George! Lord George!"

Dropping from the plinth into arms waiting to receive him, Lord George Gordon disappeared. Only a ripple, like a current intersecting calm water, showed where he forged his way to the head of the multitude.

Emy, Mary and Ephraim were wedged against a shuttered window by the surging mob. The procession, composed in the main of citizens and respectable tradesmen, marched six abreast. Accompanying it, as a kind of auxiliary force, were the loiterers and rogues of the City, who, attracted by the noise, emerged like rats from every court and alley. Each man, whether he formed part of the main column or ran with the retinue, bawled "No Popery!" with equal gusto.

Mary and Ephraim looked uneasy, but Emy's lovely eyes danced excitedly. "Come on," she cried, "or we shall miss everything. By going with the people we can soon push to the front." Using her elbows, she battered into the crowd, only to be jerked back by Mary.

She gave Emy a slap. "Stay quiet, do."

"A riot's beginning," Ephraim explained, "and we don't want to get into trouble. Last February I made a bit of a noise with the mob that was hanging an effigy of Sir Hugh Palliser (him that falsely accused Admiral Keppel of running from the Frenchies), and I nearly got caught by the constable."

"Such a turn it gave me," Mary quavered as she looked for a way of escape.

Ephraim decided: "We'll stop where we are—'tis safest."

Both shrank against a wall, but Emy, observing a barrel in a doorway, climbed upon it. Thus elevated, she had a fine view of slowly moving heads, some covered by wigs of different states of cleanliness, others with thatches of hair of varying colour and dirt.

Fish Street was narrow as it left London Bridge; at the Monument the eastern buildings were stepped back and the thoroughfare became imposing. Five-storied terraces of flat-fronted houses frowned at each

other across an uneven stretch of cobblestones; pent-houses and shop windows projected into the street; signs of all kinds hung from iron brackets. Most of the shops were closed, but here and there a master and his apprentice struggled to lift heavy shutters into position.

Emy welcomed good fortune: she need not account for the loss of money now haberdashers were shut. Her spirits rose. If only she could shake off Mary and Ephraim, who acted as a serious curb to enterprise. . . .

The street emptied, revealing a pavement littered with trampled fruit, fish, vegetables and rags torn from the clothing of the rabble. A kitten lay squashed, its entrails looped like a skein of red silk; someone had dropped a bunch of white roses; another his wig. "No Popery," "For God and religion," were chalked in sprawling letters.

Emy made calculations based upon Mary and her beau beating a retreat at right angles to the marchers proceeding towards Lombard Street. Looking around, she espied an arch into a passage between the opposite houses; as a hiding-place it had promise, the difficulty was to reach it. . . .

Mary cast shrewd glances at the shops. She knew something about heavy shutters; they were there to stay. . . .

"What to do about your dimity and calico, I don't know." She spoke in worried tones.

"It can't be helped, and if we explain to Mrs. Budd, she'll see we could act no different. At the worst I must work in the Sunday gown I have on. 'Tis a pretty thing, and handsome is as handsome does." Emy smiled wisely.

"Then we'd best go from here, and by the road we came."

Extracting a screw of snuff from her pocket, Mary took two hearty pinches before offering it to Ephraim. Less of an addict than his sweetheart, he took a similar dose, and nearly sneezed off his head. On recovering he regarded her acrimoniously.

"What d'you mean by 'ticing a fellow to overset himself, well knowing you can take as much snuff as a gentleman? How females learn such nasty tricks is a riddle to me!"

"If you'd been bred alongside Drury Lane Burying-ground, as I was, you'd have learned 'tis the best thing against churchyard fever."

As the lovers bickered they turned the street corner. The instant they disappeared, Emy, who followed closely on their heels, withdrew behind a projecting shop-front. Finding herself unmissed, she cautiously peered round the masonry. The lovers had traversed several

yards and a tiff had developed into a quarrel. Estimating her chances to be favourable, she posted in the opposite direction.

The archway led to a vintner's yard, filled with wooden staves and rusty iron hoops. Every inch of the narrow space was visible from Fish Street; the only hiding-place was an empty hogshead lying on its side. Emy did not hesitate; dropping on her hands and knees, she proceeded to crawl backwards into the cask. The saturated wood smelt richly of wine, and as she stretched her feet to the bottom she touched thick sediment which, oozing over her shoes, felt clammy as a cold poultice on her bare skin. A pool of rain-water, accumulated inside the rim, had absorbed so much colouring that it made purple stains on her dress. She dipped her finger into the liquor, sucked it, and, finding the flavour good, made a scoop of her hand and drank. The agitated voice of Mary terminated the pleasant experiment.

"It's your fault, Ephraim Gibson, for acting so cantankerous. If you hadn't riled me, I'd not have forgotten Emy; now if she comes back murdered, you're to blame." Running distractedly, she looked up at the Monument, as if expecting to see her friend roasting in the flaming urn at the top.

Emy wriggled from the barrel and poked her head round the arch, as Mary, her hoop swinging and her hair tumbling down her back, shouted to Ephraim lagging behind: "Why can't you hurry and do something?"

"'Tis hot," Ephraim complained; "and what's the use of running when we don't know which way she's gone? Posting along a street is not my way of spending a holiday. We'll go to the 'White Lion' for a couple of *double dabbers* and a peck."

Temptation assailed Mary: she thought wistfully of a long drink of cool ale, followed, at a decent interval, by a plate of beef sweetened with honey. Irked by duty, she wandered back to Ephraim. "What'll I say to Mrs. Budd about losing Emy?"

"The minx knows her way about!"

"Only as far as St. Paul's. Emy's but fifteen, for all she seems so old."

"She'll be all right," Ephraim reaffirmed, and added: "The 'Croze Bulets' serve *rumpfustian* on Fridays."

Withdrawn into the hogshead, Emy watched Mary tidying herself by the simple expedient of wiping her perspiring face on her hair before coiling it afresh. Renovations being completed, she took Ephraim's arm and disappeared in the direction of Thames Street.

Memories of delicious odours issuing from taverns between London

and Blackfriars Bridges urged Emy to follow, but pride and enterprise prevailed. Better go hungry than beg, better starve than lack adventure. . . .

Before quitting the hogshead, Emy lapped up all the wine-flavoured rain-water as a precaution against thirst, then, cautiously leaving the tiny yard, she turned in the direction taken by the procession. Unnatural silence brooded over the empty street. Every shop window was barred and shuttered; stalls, hastily abandoned, were overturned. Goods lay trampled into uniform ruin; tallow, upset from a tub on a chandler's barrow, formed an evil-smelling, yellow mound subsiding in the hot sun into a straggling pool.

Feeling happy and independent, the girl kept to the middle of the pavement. It was the first time she had walked alone since leaving her home at Hawarden. Every day she had been out, but every day she had been burdened with the weight of little Richard and responsible for Henry, an impish child of six.

Always articulate in her pleasure, she broke into a wordless aria of joy, embellished with trills *a capriccio*. As her beautiful voice rose and fell in cascades of rapture, like a lark's song dripping to earth, faces appeared at windows above the shuttered shops. The curiosity aroused by her voice was augmented by her uncommon appearance. The muslin cap in which she had set out from Chatham Place had been discarded in the vintner's yard, and her flaming chestnut hair fell from a peak on her forehead to the hem of her skirt, where, curling into ringlets, it made a fringe to dance with her buoyant feet. Her lovely, heart-shaped face, upturned, reflected the brightness and the benediction of the sun. Wide and innocent, her blue eyes gazed confidently into a kind and generous world. She was free and she could sing; what more had Emy Lyon to ask of heaven?

Climbing to the top of Fish Street Hill, she came to a shop with a wooden viola hanging in place of a sign. Behind the viola was an open window, from which leant an old man, black-eyed, olive-skinned, with white stubble growing on lantern jaws. As she came, so he clapped his hands and worked his eyebrows and shoulders, forcing Emy to keep time with his antics.

"*Brava! Brava!*" he cried in a cracked voice, "*La Bastardella* has no higher tones than you—she, too, began as a street singer. Twenty-five years ago I heard her begging as a *cantatrice* in Ferrara; yet when she came to the Pantheon, as *prima donna*, she got a hundred pounds for singing the same two songs."

"Well, I'm no beggar, and sing to please myself!"

The musician had retired into the darkness of the room and heard her not. In a moment he returned with a handful of halfpennies which he showered at her feet.

"I'm not asking for money," Emy cried.

The old man ignored her—his finer hearing had caught the sound of a bygone voice echoing from eternity. His bony hands applauded, his palsied head nodded. "*Brava! Brava! bellissima creatura,*" he whispered.

Ever grateful for admiration, Emy rewarded him with "Over the Hills and Far Away," a ditty suitable for one advanced in years. Delighted to give pleasure, she rendered the song in her best manner, until she observed that her audience slept. Mortified, she stopped abruptly, but the old man did not stir. His head had fallen sideways against the window-frame and his mouth hung awry.

In dudgeon Emy walked on, but the faster she went the more she was tempted by the money left behind. Her steps faltered; she stopped, hesitated, and slowly went back. A few pence would buy a meal, and she had never been so hungry. . . .

The old Italian still slumbered; she was saved confessing that pride had surrendered to appetite. Recovering six half-pennies from crevices between the stones, she blew a kiss to her benefactor. . . .

Emy tracked the procession through Cheapside, Ludgate Hill, Fleet Street and under Temple Bar. Tainted hot air met her in the Strand. The narrow street was hemmed in by projecting houses that checked ascent of smells from the gutters. In the neighbourhood of St. Clement's Church the stench was overpowering as noxious gases from the vaults escaped through the open windows. As Sunday approached, ventilation became imperative—the living must not be denied benefits of Church by the compelling presence of the decomposing dead.

Emy's determination was proof against polluted air. She walked on doggedly through a lesser miasma emanating from St. Mary-le-Strand, and presently was encouraged by a breeze from the Thames blowing across the site of Somerset House. The walls of the new building were rising from the gardens of the demolished palace. Some trees still grew in formal lines, roses bloomed amid a waste of bricks and rubble; on the top of the old landing-steps remained statues of Tritons and Nereids. Sparkling in the sunshine the river made a background for a raised terrace and handsome iron gates that en-

framed the rotting, timber-covered pleasure-barge known as the *Royal Diversion*, and the chimney of Beaufoy's vinegar factory uprising from the abandoned arbours of Cupid's Gardens at Lambeth.

At the bottom of Drury Lane she bought from an itinerant baker currant buns, which she ate as she went along, whereby she was sufficiently revived to run past the long, twin-turreted façade of Northumberland House. Rounding the bend into Whitehall, she was rewarded by hearing the roar of the mob and glimpsing the tail of the procession.

A wide, cobbled pavement, divided from paved paths by sugar-loaf posts, stretched into the distance. On her right was the decastyle colonnade and arched gate of the Admiralty Office, a two-storeyed building occupying three sides of a square; on her left Scotland Yard was hidden by the back of a long, low structure extending to Whitehall Palace. After narrow city streets the spaciousness came as a surprise. Emy regarded with approbation the stately government buildings. At last she had reached the aristocratic district. Glamour and mystery surrounded "the quality", whom she regarded with breathless reverence as beings far removed from the cowardly tradesmen fearfully hidden behind bolted doors. Indeed, it was impossible to suppose that fear could be experienced by the handsome gentlemen leaning from the windows of the Navy Pay Office. . . .

This substantial, three-storeyed Admiralty building had ten sash windows lighting the upper floors; each held a full complement of elegantly dressed clerks striving to see the uproar at Westminster. The glimpse afforded was indifferent, but they got a fine view of Emy as she came along. Under ordinary circumstances she would have revelled in creating a sensation, now she was uncertain of herself. Her face felt dirty, and contact with the inside of a wine cask had done no good to her best gown. . . .

The clerks of the Pay Office, experienced men of the world, ogled, smurked or looked down their noses, according to their dispositions. Among them one man vividly stood forth. His dark hair was unpowdered, his blue-and-white uniform startlingly contrasted with his neighbours' richly embroidered dress. From a dark-complexioned face Captain Willett Payne's white teeth flashed gay and friendly invitation. He whistled, he beckoned; he looked young, bold and reckless. Such merry audacity captivated Emy. Had it not been for a constraint imposed by the knowing grimaces of his friends, her response would have been hearty. She walked on, her head held

proudly, her bright tresses flowing behind her. She'd show them. . . .

At the end of the Privy Gardens she mingled with the riffraff reinforcing Lord George Gordon's petitioners. The Protestant Army had marched by four different routes from St. George's Fields to Westminster; each column, like a snowball, increased as it moved through the streets. Every thief and rogue of the town attached himself to the zealous multitude, each shouted "No Popery" as he went about his unlawful business. Beggars mobbed peers as they tried to approach the House of Lords; pickpockets appropriated purses of Members struggling to reach the Commons.

Emy's physique and energy gradually procured her a place in the front. She found herself among staid, elderly men, similar to those she had seen in Chatham Place, and near a tall Scotsman who had carried on his head the petition for the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act.

A rush for the House of Lords had just been defeated by timely closing of the doors. Lord George Gordon was in the Commons demanding immediate consideration of the petition. While the debate went on in the House, the leaders of the Protestant Army conferred in Old Palace Yard. From Parliament Street to Parliament Steps the mob, surging in uneasy movement like unto the swell of the ocean, incited each other to action by the heat and discomfort of their closely packed bodies and by the ceaseless roar of their war cry. Emy, ignorant of the cause she had adopted, soon picked up the slogan and shouted with the loudest: "No Popery! Lord George! No Popery!"

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the crowd heaved forward. The petitioners already had possession of the lobby; those outside appeared to think they could gain further territory by pushing. Thuds sounded from the interior of the building—the impact of metal upon wood. Still the monotonous roar continued: "No Popery! No Popery! Lord George! Lord George!"

Silence fell unexpectedly with the same startling effect as an explosion; a ripple from the throng in the lobby communicated itself to those without. Presently a man appeared on the steps. He was lifted bodily and cast upon the crowd; lying stiffly on upraised hands, he was propelled many yards. Coming to rest above Emy and beside the tall petition-bearer, he whispered: "Burke, the Member for Bristol, speaks against the immediate consideration of our appeal, but Lord George has won and you're to go through."

Somehow a passage was made. Emy, expecting to be squashed to

death, was revived by the spectacle of the tall Scotsman walking forward solemnly, crowned with the signatures of a hundred thousand Protestants.

Hardly had he disappeared than a waywardness manifested itself in the mob; attention slackened; cries lacked unanimity. Men began to talk together; ringleaders established themselves. One man knew the situation of a Roman Catholic chapel, another described a fine residence owned by a rich Papist. Imperceptibly people dispersed in groups, showing curious indecision by running from one band to another.

Before the castellated entrance to the House of Lords the respectable faction marshalled themselves into companies, and presently marched off in four columns, as they had come.

Emy attached herself to a group larger than the rest, led by a handsome virago, scarcely older than herself.

"Where are we going?" she asked a boy who ran with her.

"To Sardinia Street to burn the chapel where the Papists worship images. No Popery!" he suddenly bawled.

"Lord George!" yelled Emy, not to be outdone.



CHAPTER THREE

EMY staggered from the Sardinian Embassy in Lincoln's Inn Fields carrying vestments, a tall candle and an aspergillus destined for the fire kindled in the street. The entrance to the chapel was through the house, a circumstance which obliged the rioters to break two doors instead of one. To punish the Ambassador for causing so much unnecessary trouble, his chairs and tables were being used as fuel to burn crosses, pictures, ornaments and images.

It was after ten o'clock, and the rioters had just come from a successful attack on the chapel of the Bavarian Minister near Golden Square. Three ringleaders, Richard Hyde, a Quaker in a mariner's jacket, Thomas Haycock, a waiter from the St. Alban's Tavern, and John Glover, a negro servant dressed in a short rough coat and a round hat trimmed with tarnished silver lace, received the goods brought from the house.

Emy relinquished her burden to the waiter, who made a grimace. "Why didn't you bring an image?"

"There were none, and you ought to be grateful for what I've given you, seeing I'm fit to drop with fetching and carrying. Anyhow, I shall do no more." Observing a comfortable chair waiting to be burnt, Emy sat down.

Built on an inflammable foundation of candles and tapers, the funeral pyre of popery flickered in golden tongues towards the sky already a-fire from Protestant incendiarism. Behind the chapel windows a red glow throbbed; against the Embassy walls lank shadows of the rioters leapt in sympathetic mimicry.

Propped beside the gloomy archway leading to Duke Street stood waxen images of St. Ephesus and St. Potitus and a plaster Madonna. The glassy eyes of the saints glittered apprehensively, but the face of Our Lady remained serene and sweetly simpering. Emy watched some rioters pick up the figures and cast them on the fire.

Shouting and shrieking, men and women linked arms to lurch round and round in an ugly dance. Hot light beating on their faces showed reddened eyes, burnt skin and lips curling back from teeth and gums.

The saints survived the furnace no better than their martyred prototypes. Wax tears rolled down their pink-and-white countenances, their features flattened as scabs of yellow grease fell spluttering into the flames; finally all that remained were wire skeletons fringed with transparent drops. Long after the saints of Sardinia had melted, the Madonna stood proudly upright. Her soot-blackened face stubbornly confronted her persecutors, her hand, raised in benediction, seemed lifted in ironic salutation. A bedstead, hastily broken, was added to the fire; the wood burnt merrily, but its destruction had no effect upon the statue. Suddenly John Glover appeared with a gun borrowed from his master's house in Lincoln's Inn, which he discharged with such nice aim that the head and torso of the image shivered into fragments. The mob enthusiastically acclaimed the negro; two women embraced him and kissed his oily cheeks. Grinning broadly, he cuddled one in each arm.

Emy's chair stood slantwise to the bonfire. From it she could see spectators on the outskirts of the crowd, fine gentlemen who watched, but took no part in the actions of the mob. Sometimes flames illuminated their features; when this happened they hastily drew back, obliterating themselves among shadows. Emy had seen too many faces since morning to be interested in these curious appearances and disappearances. Upon ceasing to shout and dance with the rioters, she realized her weariness and her predicament. She felt fit to drop, and what to do next, God only knew. . . .

Suddenly her drowsy faculties were aroused by a familiar figure; reluctantly she struggled with a memory that proved elusive. Too tired for sustained effort, she allowed the impression to slip away. Her head nodded, her eyes closed. Fumes of incense drifted through her dreams.

A touch on her shoulder awakened her in alarm. Her lovely, terrified face looked up into the dark countenance of Captain Willett Payne.

"Caught you at last," he chuckled exultantly.

Emy's bemused senses failed her. "Leave me alone; I've done you no harm."

"Indeed you haven't, my charmer. No man spends hours searching

the rabble for a female who has served him badly. Only your fresh beauty could spur me to such a scamper."

"If you're making fun of me, you can go elsewhere, I'm not minded to be laughed at." After rubbing her eyes she looked at him again; recollection began to dawn. "You've taken off your blue coat with its gold lace—the finest coat I ever saw."

"I have some discretion, but not too much, my dear." While he talked he bent over Emy, supporting himself by a muscular brown hand resting on the arm of her chair. Now he stood upright and signalled to someone at the back of the crowd. Emy watched suspiciously; she wasn't going to be a rare show—no, indeed, not for anyone. . . .

A scuffling among the people attracted her attention. She saw a tall, dandified young man elbowing through the throng. Laughing and breathless, he came to a standstill beside her admirer.

"A real beauty, isn't she?" Captain Payne demanded with a possessive air.

"*Le beau idéal*, indeed, I've never seen more ravishing *beaux yeux*." While boldly surveying Emy, Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh delicately took snuff. "If I might ask, what do you propose to do now?"

Captain Payne turned to Emy. "What's your name, my pretty?"

"Emy Lyon, and 'tis no concern of yours."

She stood up and tried to smooth her disordered dress. It was past hope; anyway, she was too tired to care how she looked. All she wanted was somewhere to lie down and sleep. . . . A doorstep it would have to be. . . . If she'd ever have a bed again, God only knew. . . .

Swaying a little, she started to walk away. The negro had broken into the Embassy cellar and was distributing wines and spirits from the area. His ministrations imparted new life to the rioters. Fortified with freshly opened bottles, men and boys rushed into the house, to appear at the upper windows, from whence they exhibited articles of women's apparel to delighted confederates below.

Emy was soon overtaken. "What shall we do next?" Captain Payne grinned with a brotherly air. His friendly manner and engaging expression captured her fancy. Very likely Providence had sent him. . . . Lost and penniless, she needed a friend now if ever a girl did. . . .

"I don't know where I am," the confession rang alarmingly on her own ears. For the first time she awakened to the desperateness of

her position. Frantically she grasped Captain Payne by the arm. "Good God, what shall I do? I can't go back to my situation at this hour, even if I knew the way. I'm almost distracted; for pity's sake, what's to become of me?"

Sir Harry laughed. "The same that has become of other lovely females. . . ."

"Keep quiet." Captain Payne gave his friend a jovial nudge. "Emy hit my eye, you can take your turn when I'm afloat."

"*Tel est notre plaisir*," the baronet responded as he ogled Emy.

Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh was twenty-six, and but recently returned from the Grand Tour. A lengthy stay in Paris had spiced his English with French words and clichés, introduced as garnish rather than necessary parts of speech. He had greeny-grey eyes, ginger-coloured lashes and eyebrows. His sallow face was freckled, and sloped forward to a sharply pointed nose. Tall, broad-shouldered, he slouched negligently, as if his deportment had been acquired from grooms and stable-lads. Foppish in dress and dandified in manner, he typified the country squire veneered by foreign polish.

Emy was too frightened by her predicament to pay attention to the friendly wrangling of the young men. Bold and fearless in action, her morale gave way when excitement was over and she had time to reflect.

"What shall I do? What shall I do? Mrs. Budd'll not take me back with no gownds or money to show. Pray, dear kind Sir, help me because I am lost and most miserable."

"Don't worry, pretty love." Captain Payne put his arm round her waist and gave it an encouraging squeeze; "you come along with me and I'll take care of you. Mop those lovely eyes; they weren't made for crying." Thrusting a large coarse handkerchief into her hand, he turned to Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh: "Where d'you think I'd better dock her?"

"Her *habillement* is hardly *soigné*; you must buy her a *trousseau* before she can go to an *auberge*."

"You know the town better than I."

"There's Charlotte Hayes—she keeps a nice set of girls. Charlie Maynard married Nancy Parsons from Charlotte's, although he's described her as 'Mrs. Horten' in the *Peerage*, and the Earl of Scaforth took his *épousée* from there."

"That's all very well, but what's it got to do with me finding a harbour for Emy?"

Sir Harry looked nettled. "I'm just explaining it's *une maison de*

qualité, not a low bordel. You can take her to Charlotte, get accommodation for the night and make other arrangements in the morning."

"Where is it?"

"St. James's Place."

"A pretty step, and no chairs to be had in this skirmish."

"You can hire if you'll pay. Take a look outside the cockpit in Drury Lane, and I'll wait with Emy."

"Oh, no, you won't; yours is the roving commission!"

Grumbling good-naturedly, Sir Harry prepared to do as he was bidden, but first he made sure his sword was loose in its scabbard. "A member of Brooks's was stabbed t'other night in Clare Market," he explained.

Ungratefully Emy watched him disappear into the blackness of Princes Street, a narrow, dirty alley running from Duke Street to Drury Lane.

With his arm round her waist, Captain Payne urged her forward. Above their heads projecting gables leaned towards each other like convivial cronies; here and there baulks of wood, stretched across the roadway, held crazy buildings apart. Signs hung crookedly from broken brackets, a lamp guttered feebly outside a lottery office. Deceived by the flame-tinged sky, a cockerel crowed a welcome to sunrise.

Utterly exhausted, Emy stumbled into every refuse-heap and pot-hole. "Couldn't we bide on a doorstep?" she hopefully suggested.

"Not here, my pretty love; we should both be robbed."

"I haven't a farthing to bless myself with."

"You've something more valuable, and I want it."

"If I had any treasure, I'd give it you gladly."

After a while they emerged into the comparative spaciousness of Drury Lane. In "The Lane" were many gin-houses, each with an oil-dip in the window. Candles flickered in uncurtained bedrooms; a heavy iron lantern cast a pale illumination on the shoes of the old watchman who carried it. At the sign of the 'Golden Gallon' a wedding party sang in drunken disunion:—

*"Therefore, in jolly chorus now,
Let's chaunt it altogether,
And let each cull's and doxy's heart,
Be lighter than a feather;*

*And as the kelter runs quite flush,
Like natty shining kiddies,
To treat the coaxing, giggling brims,
With spunk let's post our neddies,
Then we'll all roll in bub and grub,
Till from this ken we go,
Since rowling Joe's tucke'd up with Moll,
And Moll's tucke'd up with Joe."*

Captain Payne established Emy in the wide doorway of the 'Cock and Magpie' while he reconnoitred the street. She dozed uneasily, her head against the wooden wainscoting. Rich smells of sawdust, stout and ales filtered under the bolted door.

She was awakened by Captain Payne. A link-boy carrying a flaming torch lit up Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh's sharp-featured face framed in the open window of a sedan-chair.

"I had to walk to Drury Lane Theatre before I could find anything," he said. "The playhouse was closed, but Sheridan's private *chaise à porteurs* waited outside, also two hackney chairs *retenu* for Mr. and Mrs. Linley. So I wrote and sent up a polite *billet* to the management, explaining I had taken the liberty of borrowing all three conveyances."

"You're a clever rogue," Captain Payne said admiringly.

Sir Harry cast an amorous glance at Emy. "Could a man do less for Venus?"

Emy had never ridden in a sedan-chair, and the one she travelled in was luxurious. Mr. Sheridan's liveried servants looked askance at her filthy shoes and soiled dress until Sir Harry tossed each a guinea. The chair was upholstered in pale blue brocade; from a ribbon in the roof swung an orange pomander stuck with cloves, which emitted pungent fragrance. Through the criss-cross window Emy could see the white peruke, lace-trimmed hat and plum-coloured coat of Mr. Sheridan's manservant, beyond him the bulky shape and voluminous green coat of the porter jogging behind Sir Harry's hired chair, beyond again the undulating flame of the link.

Leaving the 'Cock and Magpie' on their right, they passed the massive brick façade of Craven House, secure behind bolted courtyard gates, and entered the Strand. Emy dozed uneasily to be jerked awake every now and then by the foremost chairman stepping into

a hole in the pavement. When this occurred she half recognized the scene, but it was not until the chairs were level with Northumberland House that she recollected the lion with stiff, outstretched tail standing on an arched entablature on the roof. Its face to Carlton House, its stiff tail to the City, the crest of the Percys made a proud silhouette against the rosy sky.

Outside the 'Golden Cross' the chairs had to give way for a stage-coach entering the inn yard. Sparks flew beneath the horses' hoofs; iron-rimmed wheels rumbled as the clumsy vehicle rocked and lurched through the narrow archway. Emy caught a glimpse of running porters and of passengers alighting under yellow lamplight; of a yawning chambermaid with a guttering candle and ostlers throwing cloths over the backs of steaming horses.

In Cockspur Street they encountered a band of rioters armed with flambeaux and tallow to set fire to the house of a Catholic in St. Martin's Lane. Wild men and dishevelled women closed threateningly about the porters, bringing them to a standstill. Captain Willett Payne leapt to the seat of his chair and poked his head through the roof. Lit by the flaming torches, his sunburnt, puck-like face looked down on the shuffling company. Blandly smiling, he waved a blue cockade.

"No Popery! Lord George!" he cried.

His action had the happiest effect; the people cheered and yelled in fellowship: "No Popery! No Popery!"

Falling back, the rioters formed again into a rude procession; Captain Payne removed his hat and stood respectfully at attention, his black hair framed by the roof of the chair. "Lord George!" he intoned gravely, "Lord George!"

After the rioters had moved on, Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh congratulated his friend: "Your *savoir-faire* saved us from a nasty dilemma. I'll warrant such *flegme* in the face of the enemy will give you your flag before you're thirty."

"I'll be lucky if I'm made Post!" Captain Payne genially responded as he stepped down from his rostrum. The roof of the chair fell with a clap.

Grasping the poles, the porters jogged on again, so did their gigantic shadows, caricatures that waved and strutted along the façades of the houses.

To Emy the journey, a tail-piece to a curious day, was as devoid of reality or surprise as the inconsequent episodes in a dream. She

acquiesced in each adventure, and when she was invited to tumble out of the chair and enter a gaily lighted house, she did so without question or alarm.

Charlotte Hayes's neat domain was decorated and furnished according to French taste. The hall and staircase were hung with tapestries depicting podgy cupids and fat-haunched goddesses sequestered in wooded glades. Gilded console-tables supported nymphs in Sèvres; candles flaming in a gilt lustre chandelier were reflected in planes of golden light by waxed and polished floors.

Besides providing accommodation for several beautiful girls whose talents could not easily be specified, Mrs. Hayes was hostess, from time to time, to actresses and singers appearing at the playhouses. In a room to the left of the hall, Miss Molly Potter, just returned from performing in Mr. Colman's new prelude at the Haymarket Theatre, sat enjoying a supper of roast duckling and porter served by a small negro page. The table was a round one covered by a white cloth; encircling it were several handsomely dressed gentlemen, drinking wine and fondling pretty, painted girls. Mrs. Hayes, an ageing beauty with enormous dark eyes shadowed by ill health, sat between the actress and an elderly beau whose gallantry she sought to deflect from Miss Potter to a shy young creature but newly come from the country. Observing Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh framed in the doorway, Mrs. Hayes abandoned her tedious task as no longer necessary. Rising, she gave him her place at the table. Miss Potter greeted the baronet with a hearty kiss, but, being hungry, returned purposefully to the duckling and green peas balanced so lusciously on her knife.

Sir Harry, conferring in urgent whispers with his hostess, who leant on the back of his chair, sometimes pointed with a beringed hand to Emy and his friend languishing in the hall.

Captain Payne looked ill at ease and out of place in a house of French fripperies. With legs apart and hands on hips he stood dubiously surveying Emy. "You're beautiful, my pretty, but no cleaner than a sailor's doxy."

His words roused Emy from a doze. "What do you expect after a day such as I've had? And if you don't like me, dirt and all, I can go away. I asked you to help me, not to call me names."

"Sssh!" Captain Payne held up a warning finger and glanced anxiously into the lighted room.

Mrs. Hayes looked at Emy with large, liquid brown eyes devoid of astonishment. Smiling with graciousness born of practice, she

gave a slight shake to her yellow gown and sailed bravely towards emergency. Emy's work-worn fingers were enclosed in a soft hand. Perfume enveloped her. She looked into a face that had seen too much to be interested in anything.

"You're tired, I can see, and would like to go to your room. Fortunately one of my girls has just left—she's being set up by a protector: a magnificent *maison montée*, jewels and so forth." Mrs. Hayes looked up at Captain Payne with a wistful smile. "I never stand in a girl's way. If there's a chance of permanent association, I give her all the help I can. That's only right, I think, don't you?"

Mrs. Hayes did not wait for an answer, she talked because speech obliterated awkward pauses; she neither required nor expected responses to questions. Stifling a sigh, she started to lead the way upstairs, a journey circumstances obliged her to make too often for tired legs.

Untutored in behaviour and bewildered by fatigue, Emy would have remained lolling against the console-table had not Captain Payne twisted her about and urged her to ascend. Stumbling and clattering on the polished stairs, she followed the hooped skirts and silken slippers of her hostess.

The grandeur of the first-floor bedroom contrasted unkindly with Emy's disreputable apparel. Mrs. Hayes glanced from the sumptuous hangings to her guest's dusty shoes.

"You'll take off everything before you get into bed, won't you?" she gently inquired.

"Not my shift," Emy responded wearily.

"Is that required? My girls have charming nightsacks, but I fancy rarely wear them."

"I've never gone naked to bed, and I'm not going to be immodest now," Emy firmly answered.

"Very well, I'll see what we can supply—unfortunately you're tall. Just now all my girls are short." Smiling absently, Mrs. Hayes drifted through the door.

Left to herself, Emy was able to look about the room. Its like she had never seen. A pale pink carpet patterned with scrolls and nose-gays stretched from wall to wall, a gilt-framed mirror rose from mantelshelf to ceiling, blue silk curtains hung before the windows. A dressing-table flounced with lace and rosebuds supported a looking-glass edged with moulding in gold leaf; French chairs and footstools were scattered about: on the mantelshelf stood a gilt clock

with a little girl swinging to a rapid tick-tack. The bed was the greatest astonishment. It filled a quarter of the room. Soft, wide, luxurious, it was veiled by blue silk curtains that fell from a gilded crown topped by nodding white ostrich feathers.

Subsiding on a brocaded chair, Emy started to remove her shoes. She faced the door open to the landing. This worried her. Did the gentiy make a practice of going to sleep without privacy? When her shoes were off she'd close the door, whether 'twas the custom or no. . . .

Her feet were swollen and blistered; gingerly she wriggled her heels from the harsh leather. A nail had pierced the sole of her foot; dismayed, she noticed that a drop of blood soiled the carpet. Falling on her knees, she rubbed the mark with the hem of her dress; finding this unavailing, she moistened the stuff with her full red lip and rubbed again. Thus engrossed she had not thought of being watched until titters sounded from the landing. Looking up angrily through a tangle of tawny hair, she saw three pretty young women pointing and laughing. Their fine dresses, extended at the hips by wide hoops, filled the doorway; their powdered curls, falling on bare bosoms, shook in sympathy with their merriment.

"Look at her! Crawling about on her hands and knees. I declare she's like a wild beast. I saw one such as her in a fair at Taunton. Caught in a Russian forest it was, and I paid a penny for a peep. Had I known I would see such a creature for nothing, I'd have kept my money!"

At this witticism the three painted girls went off into peals of laughter.

Springing to her feet, Emy rushed forward menacingly. "I'll pay you to taunt me," she hissed through her teeth.

Her tormentors, more agile than they looked, took cover in an opposite room; only their heads poked round the edge of the door.

"Lud! I didn't know she was dangerous as well as dirty!" the wit exclaimed.

Emy flung across the landing, but as she approached, so the heads were withdrawn and the aperture closed. Frustrated, she had no choice but to return whence she came. Regaining the threshold of her room, she heard a scuffle behind her and a soft flop on the floor.

"There's your nightsack, little slut," cried her enemy, scurrying back to safety.

Picking up the muslin bed-gown, Emy closed the door. There was

a lock, but no key, so she pushed up a small gilt table, which gave her an illusion of security.

Rapidly she cast off her torn and dusty clothes, and, arraying herself in the flimsy garment, sat down to comb her hair through her fingers. In ones and twos people passed along the landing; doors opened and closed, a couple of girls from the opposite room ran giggling to an upper storey.

Heavy footsteps slurred upon the stairs, advanced and stopped outside. The door opened. the little table slid into the room. Captain Willett Payne entered purposefully. He had a key in his hand, which he inserted in the lock. It turned with a sharp click.

"This isn't your room," Emy remarked. 'Twas a mercy her hair was so long and thick; without its protection she would hardly be decent in such a thin gown. . . .

She waited for him to realize his mistake. But he did not go. Slightly swaying, he stood looking at her with wide black eyes. The young sea officer was handsome in a masterful foreign way. No colour appeared in his olive cheeks, but dark shadows emphasized the dominance of his eyes. His nose, thin at the bridge, broadened at the nostrils; his full, curved mouth was vividly red; his chin square and cleft. Captain Payne was distinguished by a depth of forehead that compressed his features into less than their rightful space also by the length of his slim torso, which usurped too much of his inconsiderable stature. Enemies might remark these peculiarities as defects, but Emy, grateful for kindness and dazzled by a vivid personality, was enchanted by the young man's dashing aspect.

A smell of brandy floated towards her. "Your bed isn't in here," she explained slowly and distinctly.

"Oh yes, it is, my pretty; there it stands, and 'tis big enough for two."

Emy pondered the matter. She'd never shared a bed with a man, but since she had been in service she had slept with a variety of strange girls. It wouldn't do to be selfish or shy when very likely the young gentleman was weary as herself. . . .

"We could put the bolster down the middle," she suggested; "'tis a very wide bed."

He laughed so long and so loudly that she took offence. "I don't understand what I've said to amuse you—it *is* a wide bed."

"What are we going to do in it, lovely Emy?"

"Sleep—I never was so tired in all my life."

Her answer sobered him. He stood looking at her with an expression half sulky, half contrite. "I wouldn't have fallen in with you if I'd guessed," he mumbled, "but 'tis too late now," he ended truculently.

Emy was eager to put him at his ease: "I'm obliged to you if ever a girl was, without you I don't know where I should have got."

This seemed to comfort him. "Get into bed while I undress."

The mattress was soft and sheeted with linen. . . .

"I'll turn my back," Emy promised obligingly.

Captain Payne crossed to the dressing-table, where two candles burnt. He blew out one and then the other. Emy heard him stumble to a chair; his shoes dropped with thuds muffled by the thick carpet. The smeech of the extinguished candles drifted towards her. She slept.

It seemed a long time afterwards that she was awakened by the bed inclining under his weight.

How hot his breath was. . . . It smelt of brandy. . . .



CHAPTER FOUR

IT was past ten o'clock, and Emy still lay in the luxurious bed. On a table beside her were relics of boiled eggs, bread and chocolate for two, brought up by the negro page in response to shouts from Captain Payne.

Although it was so late no sounds of life disturbed the tranquillity of the house. All noise came from without. At daybreak a sweep, waiting for his boy to emerge through a chimney-pot, had bawled from an adjoining roof. Later came sellers of water-cress, milk, eggs, mustard, salt, shrimps, fish and green hasteds. Ballad-singers and a bear-ward with his dogs and his drum performed in the street after nine; at the moment a tumbler and his dancing-girl executed feats of agility to the sound of a pipe and tambourine.

Emy was alone because Captain Payne had gone to borrow money from his friend. The sea officer had recently been unlucky at Epsom by recklessly backing Lord Grosvenor's *Diadem*, running in the new race inaugurated by Lord Derby. Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh, with greater prudence, put his money on *Diomed*, and was the richer by forty guineas.

Due to Miss Potter's casual demeanour at supper, Sir Harry in a huff had quitted St. James's Place for midnight revelry at Limmer's Hotel, a comfortless sporting hostelry at the corner of Conduit Street, frequented by country squires. Calling early, Captain Payne hoped to catch Sir Harry before pleasure took him elsewhere, and, as he had also been a guest at "Limmer's", to collect his gear preparatory to taking up fresh quarters.

Captain Payne's association with Emy promised to be happy. After getting over the first shock to her feelings she took very kindly to love, responding to passionate embraces with voluptuous abandon surprising in such a young and innocent creature. In everything she essayed, Emy was thorough.

Being too young for introspection, she reviewed the past twenty-four hours without regrets, accepting what had happened undisturbed by tortuous windings and twistings of conscience. Fate having brought her to a blue-canopied bed in St. James's, her lovely eyes looked confidently into a precarious future. Unhappily the state of her clothes prevented the best being made of the hour. If her gown had been presentable, she would have sat on the doorstep, as in Chatham Place, but her torn, wine-stained frock precluded any such indulgence. . . .

Time passed tediously; the tumbler and his dancing-girl were succeeded by a dwarf on stilts who leant nonchalantly against a lamp-post. A woman shouting "New Potatoes" trundled a barrow.

St. James's Place was a quiet backwater off the west side of St. James's Street much frequented by chairmen, who came there to eat pasties and cold porridge extracted from cupboards beneath sedan seats, or merely to restore circulation by swinging red and swollen hands. Small, secretive, flat-fronted houses stared at each other across area railings and a narrow, uneven pavement. Mrs. Hayes's establishment, occupying an island site where the road forked into paths, had been rejuvenated with a green-painted verandah and balcony. Emy climbed out upon this Frenchified extension the better to see her friend return. Eventually she saw him striding along, followed by a messenger wearing a red coat and brass buttons who carried a valise.

Captain Payne's sanguine hopes had been realized: he returned from the good-natured baronet the richer by the loan of twenty pounds, and a large green riding-cloak to cover Emy. Half vexed and half gratified, she allowed herself to be draped in its voluminous folds.

"Cover your hair with the hood, and people will suppose you've just come by coach."

"I wish I could wash my face."

He offered his handkerchief. "Copy the sensible methods of a cat, my pretty. I looked downstairs for the pump, but everywhere's locked up. A house like this doesn't come to life till nightfall."

Acting on his advice, Emy made herself less conspicuous. Captain Payne extracted a guinea and laid it on the dressing-table. "That ought to be enough—Mrs. Hayes only provided a room."

Emy accompanied her lover downstairs. The house was silent and stuffy with fumes of last night's wine. A slant of sunlight shining

between the closed curtains of the dining-room lit up iridescent green flies feasting on the pickings of duck left by Miss Potter.

Captain Payne opened the front door, and shut it behind him with a careless crash. The morning was warm, sunny and cloudless. Followed by the porter carrying Captain Payne's valise, they walked towards King Street and stopped at Nerot's Hotel. While her protector went to engage a curricle, Emy was conducted up a heavy carved staircase adorned with mythical pictures of Apollo and Daphne, to a dark room looking down upon stables. Smells of dung, old leather, oats and straw had so long permeated the atmosphere that curtains and bedhangings had become pickled and smelt like so many horsecloths. Free from quiddling fancies, Emy wasted no time on criticizing her quarters. Instead, she flung up the window, planted her elbows on the sill and looked down at Captain Payne inspecting, with a knowing air, a pair of flea-bitten greys being harnessed for his benefit. It was not long before Emy attracted his attention, and also that of the ostlers, who accorded her a furtive but lively admiration.

When the curricle was ready, Captain Payne beckoned, climbed into the vehicle, and, in a manner more dashing than skilful, drove from the yard. Emy ran down and joined him in the street.

Captain Payne's experience of horses was limited to riding in the island of St. Christopher. As the youngest son of the Lieutenant-Governor, he had availed himself of the limited opportunities of his father's stables. Prowess on island-bred horses had encouraged false confidence: he nearly carried away a wheel against the railings surrounding the pond in St. James's Square, and managed to splinter a guard-post while crossing the courtyard before the Royal Mews. These mishaps sobered him, and he drove more cautiously.

They encountered no rioters until they turned into St. Martin's Lane and met a coach surrounded by a band of ragamuffins waving and huzzaing. Inside sat Lord George Gordon, bowing left and right; his freshly powdered hair and a coat of cut velvet transformed him from the wild figure he had presented the previous morning when haranguing his followers from the plinth of the Monument.

Acting upon Sir Harry's advice, Captain Payne took Emy to a theatrical costumiers under the Little Piazza in Covent Garden. Here she was fitted with a robe and petticoat of blue taffeta, a pink silk hooded cape, pink buckled shoes and a large straw hat trimmed with feathers and ribbons. After she was dressed, a barber was requisi-

tioned to curl, crape and powder her hair. She left the establishment feeling strange and splendid and more in keeping with her new life; only her work-worn hands rasped harshly against her silken finery. When it came to climbing back into the curricie, her hoop gave a great deal of trouble and swung about like a large bird-cage, yielding only to protrude elsewhere.

Captain Payne's admiration compensated for loss of freedom. "Mrs. Robinson isn't a patch on you for looks."

Emy's short night having scarcely recovered her from the exertions of the previous day, she declined Captain Payne's offer to take her to Bagnigge Wells. Instead, after a dinner of salmon, lamb, green peas and custard tarts, served in a private room at Nerot's, they betook themselves to St. James's Park to join the fashionable parade. To her satisfaction, Emy found she could eclipse in looks any of the beauties flirting with gallants under the trees.

Although no liveried servants were allowed in St. James's Park, there were hawkers in plenty, selling laces and ribbons and aids to beauty. A girl with a ravaged, dissipated face and bold, tired eyes followed them along the south bank of the canal pertinaciously repeating "Pomatum, my lady, of all sorts; lip-salves, forehead cloths and handkerchiefs for the face and neck; fine mouse-skin eyebrows, that will stick on so as never to come off; right chemical liquor to change the colour of the hair, and trotter oil and bear's-grease to make it grow. Besides these things, I have other articles to charm the men, who will sometimes be examining: I carry Spanish wool to colour the cheeks; powders both scented and plain, and cachous to give fragrance to the breath."

Near the site of Rosamund's Pond the girl left them to loiter among the City Militia, setting up a line of tents extending as far as the decoy.

"Preparing a drubbing for Lord George and his army," Captain Payne astutely surmised.

As Emy and her esquire passed the Queen's House they saw the King coming out through the gate. He rode in a sedan-chair, preceded by footmen and Yeomen of the Guard. He looked sour; his face was red and bloated and he ignored the people who bowed to him as he passed. Emy, attempting a curtsy, felt she admired him much less than before she had seen him. . . .

The sun was setting when the lovers reached King Street; Nerot's Hotel, unlit except by the twenty-four black windows across its old

and gloomy façade, looked so forbidding that by mutual consent they strolled on towards the square. A rosy glow irradiated the houses, the pewter surface of the pond was dappled and flecked with scarlet, over the calm, pale sky floated a shoal of little clouds like golden fish.

The circular pond was inclosed by octagonal railings; at each angle uprose a lamp-post. Save for a lamp-lighter carrying a ladder, an oil-can and a tinder-box, Emy and Captain Payne had the square to themselves. At first they walked close to the water, within hearing of the spattering fountain, but the path was so narrow that the swing of Emy's hoop brought her petticoat in contact with the railings. They crossed the cobbles to the flat paving of freestone running in front of the houses. With his cane Captain Payne struck one of the street posts; small ingots drawn up like soldiers on parade.

"These are made from cannon captured by the late Admiral Boscawen in his action off Cape Finisterre in May 1747. The Admiral's brother lives yonder," he said, pointing to Viscount Falmouth's house.

"Who was the Admiral fighting?"

"The French." Captain Payne sounded surprised at the question. "In 1744 Admiral Boscawen captured the French frigate *Médée* commanded by M. de Hacquart, who became his prisoner again in 1747, and yet again in 1755."

Emy suppressed a desire to ask why M. de Hacquart had been released only to be caught again, like a mouse tormented by a cat. Instead she inquired: "Have you ever fought the Frenchies?"

"I was in the *Phoenix* with the squadron under Lord Howe at the defence of Sandy Hook and at the attempt to bring the French Fleet to action off Rhode Island two years ago on the 11th of August. D'Estaing feared to engage us—what can you expect from a Frenchman who started life as a soldier and only took to sea at thirty?"

Emy, never guilty of pretension, confessed she had not heard of Sandy Hook or Rhode Island and was as ignorant of Frenchmen as the stray dog licking itself on the steps of Lord Falmouth's mansion. In response to eager questions, Captain Payne told her of days and nights at sea, of sailing up the Hudson River under a cannonade from batteries on both shores, of privation, sickness, death. He described Lord Howe's skilful disposition of an inferior fleet for a battle on which depended the fate of New York, a battle never

fought because Comte D'Estaing dared not take his heavy ships across the harbour bar.

As she listened, Emy identified herself with each stirring incident. Her lively fancy enabled her to embellish battle-pictures with vignettes of her own invention, subsidiary episodes of heroism in which she—Emy Lyon—played principal part. When an ebb-tide prevented Sir Peter Parker working up to New York with the object of supporting the left flank of the British army, Emy, providentially standing on the flagship's fo'c'sle, caught up a hawser, leapt overboard, and, swimming strongly for three miles, towed the *Bristol* into New York harbour. Happily she was able to perform a similar service for Admiral Howe's squadron becalmed after the signal had been made to weigh. By superhuman exertions she dragged each ship across the bar, thus accelerating by six days the squadron's departure to relieve the garrison at Rhode Island. Her prowess having altered the whole course of the war, she followed these incidents to their natural conclusion by visualizing herself accepting the Order of the Bath from a gratified Monarch, a glorious dream abruptly shattered by Captain Payne.

Drawing her into the dark courtyard of Norfolk House, he put his arms round her waist and kissed her until he forced her to lean back from his embrace. Rudely recalled from scenes of glory, fame and triumph, Emy reverted but indifferently to a rôle of allurements.

"What's wrong with you, Emy? You've suddenly turned chaste as a nun. When a fellow's got only a few days ashore he's a right to expect something lusty from his sweetheart."

Emy, attempting to be more accommodating, soon returned his kisses with ardour.

"That's better," he acknowledged; "perhaps you felt cold? That pretty cape we bought is for show, not for warmth. I'd buy you another if I weren't so short of money. You'll have to wait for fine clothes until you join Fetherstone."*

Emy contemplated the prospect and found it distasteful. "I'd prefer to stay with you."

"Handsomely spoken, Emy, and I love ye the better for it. But a poor sea officer can't afford luxuries. What would you do, my pretty, if I smuggled you aboard the *Cormorant*?"

"I'd like it well; soon I'd be as good a seaman as any in your ship." He rocked her indulgently against his shoulder. "An 18-gun sloop

* Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh's name was abbreviated by his friends.

is no place for a lovely woman. Wait till I'm captain of a first-rate, then I'll take you to sea as a Mid."

They no longer had the square to themselves; two chairs accompanied by footmen and link-boys entered through York Street. The waving flames that cast a fluctuating yellow glow upon the cavalcade bred long shadows which crept over the pavement to drown in the pond. Night had fallen, all windows were shuttered. Save for the splash of light around the lamps and a pulsing glow from a fire raging far beyond the spire of St. James's Church, it was impossible to distinguish any feature in the uniform blackness. Touching the area railings with his cane, Captain Payne felt his way to the corner of King Street.

Half-way down the thoroughfare the arched windows of Almack's made a viaduct of light across the darkness; from a coach drawn up at the door a beau in richly embroidered clothes was helping a woman wearing a hooped white dress to descend. In the distance torches and chairs were advancing from converging streets. Gradually the whole area became illuminated by dancing flames. Happy to be in the limelight, confident of her beauty, Emy walked along the middle of the pavement. Captain Payne drew her aside to allow the people to pass who had followed from St. James's Square. The footmen halted at the awning projecting from Almack's; the chair roof was lifted and the door opened. The Prince of Wales stepped out upon the pavement; as Emy passed he gave her a bold look. . . .

After the glare and gaiety of the street, Nerot's Hotel afforded but a gloomy welcome. A rush-light burnt dimly at the foot of the stairs, its stink blending with and augmenting the warm odours of stables, food, wines and privies that met and enfolded guests who ventured within.

During the two following days Captain Payne introduced Emy to pleasure resorts in and about the town. Impetuous and high-spirited, he exercised no discretion in choosing places of entertainment. In a hired carriage he drove at random from Bagnigge Wells, where Emy sampled the medicinal water only to spit it out in an ungenteel manner, to Sadler's Wells to watch egg-dancers and performing dogs. From these respectable haunts he took her to see duck-hunting at Jenny's Whim in Pimlico, thence to the 'Swan', a notorious house at Knightsbridge, where she drank gin which made her head reel. As a restorative they walked to the Spring Garden for Emy to be revived on custard tarts and a mess of cream.

At breakfast on Monday a messenger from Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh brought an invitation for the evening to Vauxhall. Emy was enchanted until she noticed her lover's sulky expression.

"I'll have to square yards with Fetherstone. After Wednesday he can have things his own way; until then I'm not relinquishing my rights."

"I've heard Vauxhall Gardens are the finest you ever saw."

"So they are, but I can get there without an escort." Captain Payne tore up the offending invitation and scattered the pieces on the floor.

Emy looked out of the coffee-room window. "The messenger is waiting."

"Let him!"

Quitting the hotel half an hour later, they found the messenger still at the door. The man pulled a dirty forelock and expectantly extended his hand.

"There's no reply," said Captain Payne.

"His honour ordered me to bring back an answer even if I waited all day for it."

"Then that's what you must do, my fine fellow, and you may thank me for putting you in the way of earning much money."

Captain Payne walked off in a high-and-mighty fashion. Emy was puzzled why a civil invitation should be treated in such a summary manner, but feeling no interest in the sandy-haired baronet, she quickly dismissed the matter from her thoughts.

It was becoming difficult to move about the town. Lord George Gordon's army had been comparatively quiet on Saturday and Sunday; invigorated by the week-end rest, they were now earnestly applying themselves to duty. Early in the morning reprisals were made upon two tradesmen of Clare Market and Little Queen Street whose evidence had convicted a few rioters taken on Friday to Newgate. Having dealt drastically with both enemy establishments, the mob advanced upon Leicester Fields, where they attacked and wrecked Sir George Saville's mansion; from thence they adjourned to Welbeck Street to make a bonfire of crosses, images, pictures and vestments before Lord George Gordon's house.

Captain Payne and Emy were in time to see the flaming demonstration. The mob, in gay and sprightly humour, insisted that Emy should descend from the carriage and join in a frolic around the fire, Captain Payne being permitted to remain with the horses, which

had grown restive. Supported on one side by a sweep and on the other by a street raker, Emy threw herself into the giddy whirl so actively that her dress, swinging wildly with her hoop, suffered much from contact with the working clothes of her partners. Her dancing won unanimous approval, and she was not permitted to return to the curricule until she contributed a solo performance to the air of "Over the Hills and Far Away", whistled by the musical members of the mob. Her graceful and animated steps were rewarded by enthusiastic applause, which Lord George Gordon, in the window of his drawing-room, cordially supported.

Breathless and flushed with triumph, Emy climbed back into the carriage, expecting praise for her efforts. Instead she was accorded a scowling greeting.

"I'm not fastidious, as you must know, but I was shocked to see you dancing like a drunken jade on Portsmouth Point."

"I was only anxious to oblige, and I had no choice but to do as I was bid. 'Tis pleased you should be I was able to put the people into such good humour; if they'd disliked our behaviour there's no knowing what might have happened. But if you don't care for my ways you can put me down and off I'll go. 'Tis not my fancy to be beholden to those who think ill of me."

"Don't be foolish, Emy."

Captain Payne whipped the horses, and they sprang forward so suddenly that he nearly lost the reins. His ineptitude augmented his vexation. In acrimonious silence they passed the Marylebone Gardens and turned into the new road to Islington.

Their pilgrimage was induced by a newspaper advertisement which ran thus:

"Cold Bath, in the New Road, near the Adam and Eve Tea Gardens, is now in fine order for the reception of ladies and gentlemen. This bath is supplied from as fine a spring as any in the kingdom, and is replete with every accommodation for bathing, situate in the MIDST of a pleasant garden. This water has been remarkably serviceable to people subject to lowness of spirits and nervous disorders."

Captain Payne, brought up on sea bathing, regarded the jaunt as one of necessity; Emy counted it a pleasure and a new experience. As she pointed out, the basin of water supplied by Nerot's Hotel

was enough for persons like herself who had been taught to wash in sections, beginning with the face. . . . Not, of course, that she denied the benefits of simultaneous immersion. . . .

The arrangement of the bath rendered it easy for Captain Payne to maintain an aloof and offended demeanour. Rustic paths took the ladies and gentlemen to different ends of the pool, and, to uphold and preserve decorum, a net a few inches high was stretched across the surface of the water. An old woman, presiding in a log cabin, hung Emy's blue silk dress on a nail and substituted a cotton suit with pantalets tied at the ankles and embellished at the waist with a miniature farthingale. On entering the water this contrivance uprose and prevented the wearer from finding any resting-place for her arms. Despite this drawback imposed by modesty, Emy derived much pleasure from the novel experience. Chestnut and willow trees fringed the pool, a brown squirrel on the end of a branch scattered white blossoms on her powdered hair, a pair of jays flew from bank to bank.

Cold water dispelled Captain Payne's ill humour. He came up to the net and, catching Emy unawares, ducked her so vigorously that she lost her footing and fell upon the mud at the bottom. The farthingale enveloped her like a cage. Struggling, she came to the surface. All about her the water was white with powder, rivulets flavoured with orris root and orange flowers trickled from her hair into her mouth.

Balanced between anger and laughter, she upbraided her lover across the fragile boom. "Unkind Jack to treat me so; and foolish, too, to waste all the money spent on powder and craping. Now I'm no different from one of my mother's pasties waiting for the oven. My God, what a sight I must be! But what matter is it so long as we're happy?" Bending down, she tried to wash off the remaining powder. Her hair floated away on the water—long, tawny strands like the seaweed called "Mermaid's tresses" which grew on the rocks at Parkgate, near her birthplace at Neston.

Anxious to obliterate all memory of the tiff, Captain Payne regaled Emy on a dinner of chicken, peas, bread and wine at the Adam and Eve Tea Gardens in Tottenham Court Road, before driving back to London between fragrant hawthorn hedges.

That night he took her, not to Vauxhall, where Sir Harry entertained a party, but to the more aristocratic, though less lively, Ranelagh. Surrounded by a distinguished company who eyed Emy

with admiring curiosity, they sauntered round the illuminated gardens, viewed the canal and Chinese buildings, and finally followed the throng into the Rotunda, where they listened to the orchestra, drank tea, and became a part of the fashionable procession walking round and round. At ten o'clock they applauded moving transparencies, at eleven all fairy lights in the grounds were extinguished and the orchestra played "God Save the King" in the glow cast by three candles left burning in the Rotunda.

So recklessly had Captain Payne spent money that by Tuesday morning he found his resources nearly exhausted. Only by strict economy would his funds suffice for the hotel bill and his coach fare to Portsmouth. Emy wholeheartedly agreed to plans for retrenchment, but met with opposition his suggestion of transferring her person to the care of Sir Harry.

"Yesterday you didn't wish me to meet him at Vauxhall, now you're willing I should go to him. I don't want to; he's foxy-faced and he uses words I can't understand. I'll dress up as a sailor and come to sea with you instead."

"You're a silly girl, Emy, to suppose you'd deceive even the most ignorant ship's boy."

"I'd cut off my hair." Emy gave a little gasp before she suggested this supreme sacrifice.

Captain Payne answered irritably: "Don't be foolish."

He felt in the pocket of his Nankin breeches and counted his money again. "I was sure I had another guinea," he sighed; "if I had 'twas stolen last night. 'Twill be a close squeeze for us both to live on this till to-morrow. We'd best go along and see Fetherstone; if he says he'll take you now, I won't stand in your light."

Emy's face was rebellious. "I won't be given away like a stick of cherries."

"Ye have no choice; between gentlemen a promise is a bond."

"I made no promise," Emy miserably retorted.

"It wasn't necessary; your welfare devolved upon us. As a public man I could only give you protection for a few days; Sir Harry's position allows him to offer longer security. Damme, Emy," he said, forgetting he was bound by honour to support the dignity as well as the machinations of another male, "if you play your cards cleverly there's no reason why you shouldn't be mistress of Uppark till Fetherstone takes a wife."

Furious resentment bereft Emy of speech. Sullenly she accom-

panied her lover from the hotel and walked beside him to St. James's Street. All entrances were held by the King's Guards, and they were turned back. Ordinarily Emy would have made excited comments on this evidence of martial law. Anger restrained her. Bright spots of colour burnt in her cheeks, her chin was proudly tilted, only the whisper of her swinging hoop imposed itself on poignant silence. Side by side, yet aloof as strangers, they walked up Old Bond Street to Limmer's Hotel. Emy's advent caused such commotion among the sporting squires lounging in the coffee-room and lobby that Captain Payne's smouldering temper flamed. Grasping her by the arm, he hustled her from the building and along Conduit Street to Trinity Chapel, into which he unceremoniously thrust her.

"Wait for me," he commanded as the baize door sighed into its frame.

Emy walked furiously up and down. . . . She'd go, walk out into London. . . . Lose herself. . . . Come to grief, most likely. . . . She visualized a wild leap from London Bridge. . . . A lovely drowned girl floating down the river. . . . Captain Payne, overcome by remorse, stepping in front of a cannon ball. . . . A double coffin covered with the Royal Standard, lent by the King. . . .

The chapel of ease was small and its aisle so narrow that Emy's wide hoop frequently became jammed. Disengaging her skirts interrupted the flow of imagination; so she sat down in a pew, to find that her fancy, like her anger, subsided without the stimulus of rapid motion.

After a few minutes the door was pushed open and Captain Payne entered. Casting himself upon a seat in front of Emy, he turned his shoulder towards her. "He's gone!"

"Sir Harry?"

"Yes, ordered his coach to be ready early and set off for Uppark before breakfast. He didn't leave any message for me."

"He's paying you for not answering his invitation to Vauxhall," said Emy with a flash of insight.

"Just like him! Up to a point he's easy to manage, but one never can prophesy when he'll turn sulky."

Lapsing into gloomy silence, Captain Payne found vent for his spleen by kicking the pew in front of him. The news had a contrary effect upon Emy. Her spirits rose.

"'Tis no grief to me he's gone away, and I hope he'll not hurry to come back."

"How do you mean to manage without him?"

"Somehow!" Emy responded with easy optimism. "Rather than leave me alone you'll take me to Portsmouth, and if I cannot go to sea, there may be a little cottage on the shore where I can live."

While Emy indulged in airy fancies, Captain Payne surveyed her critically. Such lack of reason surfeited a man when his passion was satisfied. Despite her lovely face, she had no more sense than other cattle. . . .

"I'll write to Fetherstone and give him your address."

"That I haven't!"

He looked at her blankly. "No more you have!"

Emy began to laugh, so gaily that she infected her lover. Soon the little chapel rang with thoughtless youthful laughter.

"Supposing I sleep in the park to-morrow night!" Emy gasped.

"'Tis warm, and ye might do worse."

"Indeed 'twill be no hardship if I'm left alone."

"Anyway, there's half a bed for you this night, my pretty; and who knows what the future holds?"

"I want fame and glory."

Indulgently he chucked her under the chin. "I'll try to leave you with a few shillings."

Opening the door, he let in a shaft of sunshine. Dust, floating on the air, became transformed into minute fairy-like particles eternally swirling in an intricate dance.

"Where are we going?" asked Emy.

"God knows!"

The door fell behind them with a sigh.



CHAPTER FIVE

HAD not lack of money curtailed the wanderings of Emy and Captain Payne, the activities of the rioters would have done so. Soldiers were on duty at both Houses of Parliament and at St. James's Palace. Now and again a shot rang out, but the mob had command of the town. Zealots, having ceased to differentiate between Protestant and Catholic, with impartial ardour burnt the homes of both. Tongues of flame flickered from every quarter; at six o'clock it was rumoured that the mob marched upon Newgate.

Emy was eager to witness what promised to be the most spectacular demonstration of the riots, but was discouraged by Captain Payne on grounds of prudence and economy.

"Not that I'm the man to hold back from a frolic," he explained, "but as an officer in the Naval service I should be unwise to risk arrest now the Guards are out. Besides, we've no money to hire a hackney coach, and I lack inclination to walk so far."

Once again they paced St. James's Square. The light from thirty fires throbbed on the sky, to focus in a red-and-gold aurora behind Norfolk House.

Captain Payne pointed his cane at the illumination. "Looks prophetic for the drunken representative of the Howards. In order to sit in Parliament, the Earl of Surrey has changed his religion, but last week at the Cocoa Tree, when he was half seas over, I heard him boasting that 'in spite of having to swallow the Protestant oath, there would be three good Catholics in Parliament': Lord Nugent, Sir Thomas Gascoyne and himself."

"Perhaps, if we wait, the mob will come and burn down his house," Emy hopefully surmised.

"What a mutineer you are, Emy! From your character you might be Irish."

"I'm no rebel, though 'tis said my father's mother came from

Dublin and that I take after her. I'd always serve the right side if I knew which 'twas, for fight I must if a battle be on."

In the hope of witnessing a skirmish between mob and militia, they strolled into Pall Mall. It was deserted. At the far end rows of lanterns pricked the ruddy twilight with points of gold, delicate chains outlining the dark turrets of St. James's Palace. Rooks cawed as they circled and wheeled above their nests in the tall trees of Carlton Gardens; a cascade splashed beyond the high wall, scents of mignonette, stocks and roses drifted on the warm air. Where Cockspur Street crossed to the Haymarket, flitting lights recorded the passage of link-boys and chairs.

The scene encouraged sentiment. Drawing Emy within a gateway, Captain Payne kissed and fondled her with passion he had thought sated. She submitted kindly, returning his caresses with inattentive friendliness.

Piqued by her mood, he gave her a little shake. "Don't you love me, Emy?"

Truthful by inclination, she paused to give the matter due thought. Her standards of love being limited, she compared her feelings for him with those she felt for her mother. The test proving conclusive, she reported the result. "I don't love you, but I like you well. You're so gay and thoughtless that we match each other. But one must admire before one can love, and a girl must choose as well as be chosen. You think no better of me than of a pretty ribbon picked up in the gutter."

The answer was disconcerting. "That's an odd thing to say to a man."

"'Tis true, and you know it. Never mind"—she gave his hand a consoling squeeze—"you wouldn't want my love if I gave it, so 'tis best I should keep what wouldn't be valued." Extricating herself from his arms, she started to walk towards Carlton House.

The Royal Palace was without a tenant. White blinds were drawn down at the windows, behind the Corinthian portico massive polished doors were shut and guarded by chains. The quietness of the palace was not reflected by the courtyard, which exhibited activities befitting a barrack square. Illuminated by flambeaux, members of the Military Foot Association were drilling under the supervision of a rotund citizen who wore a plum-coloured sash round the waist of his handsome uniform coat. Such martial evolutions delighted Emy. To obtain a better view she poked her head between the columns in

the long range that separated the royal courtyard from Pall Mall.

That her interest was so readily deflected from himself was an additional mortification to Captain Payne. "Our last night, perhaps for ever, yet you prefer watching antics of mock soldiers to loving me."

Emy's soft heart was touched. She turned swiftly, flung her arms around his neck and kissed him warmly. Not bargaining for a public proof of regard, he roughly shook her off, and, without ascertaining if she followed, beat a sheepish retreat towards St. James's Square.

Emy started in pursuit, thought better of it and faced about towards the town. She would see a little more before returning to an angry lover. . . .

The fiery glow suffusing the sky imparted a pink tinge to walls and buildings; even shadows were tinted. All was visible, yet muted as dawn seen through red spectacles. On reaching the junction of the north, east and western thoroughfares, Emy heard the murmur of a large concourse approaching from the City. From a muttering rumble the sound gradually increased to a roar. Looking towards Charing Cross, she saw the van of a procession advancing round the bend with banners, drums and whistles. On either side yelling men and women, carrying torches, leapt into the air for better views of the prisoners released from the cells of Newgate. The main column, formed into squadrons, maintained rough discipline. Armed with iron crowbars, mattocks, bludgeons, and spokes of cart wheels, the leaders marched immediately behind a dirty blue cotton banner ornamented with a red flannel cross. Among them Emy recognized Thomas Haycock, the waiter from St. Alban's Tavern, Richard Hyde, the crazy Quaker, and John Glover, who had his black arm round a street trollop. These men who had figured prominently on the first day of the riots, formed a bodyguard for Francis Mockford, a tall, emaciated man with a fanatic's face, holding the great keys of Newgate high above his head. Sweat ran down his hollow cheeks, his arms, extended and linked together by the iron ring connecting the keys, trembled with fatigue and were marble white from restricted blood. Like Thomas Haycock, he was a waiter, and as he walked the fringe of his white apron fluttered against bony shins.

Behind the ringleaders released prisoners, looking pale and scared, rode on horseback. Heavy irons still shackled their arms and legs and they lay like sacks over the backs of the horses. At intervals the cavalcade stopped to heave back into place those who were

slipping. Above the noise Thomas Haycock's voice shouted encouragement. "Not a prison shall stand in London to-morrow. The Bishop's house shall be destroyed; the Duke of Norfolk's Papist mansion shall make a burnt offering to heaven. We are well supported, I tell you, for there are six or seven noblemen and Members of Parliament on our side."

His eyes, sweeping the crowd, lighted on Emy. Shouting a welcome, he left his place and forged his way towards her. "Come along, my poppit, and take your rightful part in the procession. No one shall say Thomas Haycock was forgetful of assistance given to the great Protestant cause. You were at the wrecking of the Sardinian Chapel, and yesterday, outside Lord George's house, you gave as pretty a dance as ever I did see."

Ignoring her protests, he took her by the wrists and dragged her through the throng to a place beside John Glover. The negro eyed her up and down and his doxy gave her a scornful glance.

"Take no notice of them," Haycock counselled; "I'll put you on t'other side o' me—one female should always balance another."

Emy endeavoured to free herself, but the waiter held her tighter. "Leave go," she said. "I've something better to do than walk in a procession with a lot of rag-tag."

"Got proud, haven't you, since you were favoured by a gentleman? I've taken a fancy to you myself, Spitfire, and to-night the servant is as good as the master."

He took a firmer grip. Despite her fine physique, Emy was no match for the powerful waiter. Willy-nilly she walked by his side. Anger and shame alternated. She hated Thomas Haycock, and if opportunity arose she would certainly kill him. Jack Payne did right to rebuke her for wild behaviour. . . . Had she paid heed to warnings and shown more respect for herself, her present plight would not have occurred. . . . If her lover was a witness, what excuse could be offered? . . .

She tried to conceal herself behind Richard Hyde's greatcoat; old, grey and voluminous, it was spattered with blue paint, which still dripped from his flapped hat. So liberally had the Quaker applied the Protestant colour that his hair as well as his clothing shared in his zealous demonstration. Unfortunately he changed his station, walking first on one side of Francis Mockford and then on the other. Lacking permanent shelter, Emy covered her head with her pink silk hood.

No lights showed in the Haymarket; both the Opera House and the theatre were closed. Up the deserted street the procession and its attendant rabble swept like a tidal wave. Dust and litter floated before, flotsam of the gutter churned to the surface by the surge of feet. In St. James's Market many persons slipped on rotten fruit and rabbit skins; a mare fell with her manacled rider. Finding neither able to rise, the procession skirted round them and flowed on towards the square.

On leaving the shelter of Charles Street, Emy looked apprehensively for Captain Payne. Reflection from the sky no longer illuminated the houses and lake, but light from rioters' torches penetrated to the farther side of the square. It was empty: only shadows leapt grotesquely up and down the house-fronts, while black replicas of the street posts lay like yawning graves.

The mob separated into detachments. Rioters who had lights and weapons converged upon Norfolk House; horses carrying released prisoners were led towards York Street; John Glover and his strumpet, Richard Hyde, Thomas Haycock and Emy followed the swaying figure of Mockford to the railings guarding the lake.

Suddenly Haycock jumped and snatched the keys. As Mockford's stiff arms bent, his shriek of anguish echoed forlornly across the square.

Thrusting the iron ring into Emy's hands, Haycock said: "There, my duck, I have given you the prize of the Christian war waged against Popery and oppression. Throw the keys of Newgate into the water, sweetheart—throw them far and deep."

Panting and sobbing, Mockford dropped on his knees and clawed at Emy's hands: "I carried them, I carried them," he moaned, "high above my head to show them to heaven. 'Tis my right to sink them. I earned it."

Emy hastily relinquished the keys. "Poor man! indeed they are yours, and 'twas no wish of mine to rob you." Glancing at the negro and Richard Hyde, she incitingly added: "And if I had my way I'd throw Thomas Haycock into the pond as well; 'twould do him good to get a ducking, for a nastier thief I never saw."

Unprepared for her words and their result, Haycock went down under united attack. Complacently, Emy watched her deputies administering justice until she felt something hard and cold insinuated into her hand. Looking down, she saw the smallest of the prison keys.

"The condemned cell," Mockford gently explained. With a touch

of his finger he directed Emy to the railing. "Into the middle," he admonished.

The key struck the fountain, then, ricochetting, sank with a tiny splash. Mockford raised the great keys and swung them thrice above his head; meeting the water slantingly, they displaced a wide feather of spray.

His task accomplished, he collapsed against the railings; a paroxysm of coughing shook his bony shoulders. Thomas Haycock, inert and groaning, was absorbed in his own suffering, but his assailants showed signs of tiring. Concluding that prospects of escape might soon be less favourable, Emy stole towards York Street. A shot rang out; looking back, she saw a line of soldiers, and the mob scattering in all directions.

Running between high garden walls, she emerged into Jermyn Street and almost collided with the cavalcade from Newgate halted at the back of St. James's Church. A woman had fallen from her horse and lay on the ground, a motionless bundle of rags and chains. By the light of a single torch, men, wearing sacks over their heads, attempted to heave her back. Haste hampered their efforts, a voice peremptorily calling from the head of the line made them drop her. The procession started again; although the night was sultry, a cold, damp reek accompanied them. As Emy sped past she was followed by eyes that glittered balefully through matted hair. Not until she regained the stuffy security of Nerot's Hotel was she able to shake off a feeling of horror and panic.

She found Captain Payne in bed and apparently unconcerned for her safety. His indifference caused her to feel unutterably forlorn, tears of self-pity stung her eyes. To hide her weakness she averted her face from the bed with its cumbrous tester of crimson rateen.

Her lover yawned: "Think I must have fallen asleep. What did you do after I left you?"

With wide-open eyes Emy stared at the rush-light. Unshed tears transmitted a false image to the feeble flame, representing it as a golden meteor emitting fiery shafts. By manipulating her lashes this phantasm could be made to expand and contract in a pleasing manner.

Tremulously she answered his question: "I walked towards the Haymarket and saw the rioters."

"Gave them a wide-berth, I hope?" Captain Payne cuffed his pillow and turned upon his side. His unbuttoned night-shirt revealed

his broad chest scarred by a wound received in the attack on Fort Moultrie, Sullivan's Island. Flushed with sleep, his dark, reckless young face looked infinitely pathetic. Emy was oppressed by tender pity for them both.

"Should you have cared had I taken a fancy to go off with the rioters?" she wistfully inquired.

He snuggled more comfortably into the feather bed. "You're free to do the best you can for yourself. But you'd be foolish to throw yourself away on a thief or a vagabond when you're still fresh and able to pick and choose."

"I think I'll blow out the light," she said.

"'Twill make a beastly stink, but I don't care if it induces you to come more swiftly to bed. The devil knows when I'll lie with a woman again, and 'twill soon be morning."

Emy had an indifferent night, but her lover slept as daylight seeped through the heavy curtains. Lying awake, she heard an ostler loiter into the yard and unbar the stable door. Hoofs rang on cobbles; men growled uncouth commands and hissed as they groomed; carriages were wheeled out and washed. The night's bedding was added to the midden, a smell of manure drifted through the window. Another day had come.

The Portsmouth stage-coach left from the 'Golden Cross', but called to pick up passengers at the 'White Bear' in Piccadilly. Emy and Captain Payne reached the inn yard ten minutes before the coach was due. As the moment approached for farewell, they became shy of each other and, to avoid touching on matters of exigency, embarked upon elaborate comments on trivial subjects.

With breezy gaiety Captain Payne drew Emy's attention to a row of windows supporting a covered gallery. "That's as like the stern walk of a first-rate as anything you could see. Remove the pent-roof and 'tis as similar as makes no matter."

Emy regarded the back of the inn with grave interest. The first floor projected and rested on oak corbels. Ten leaded windows, separated by beams, supported a gallery and carved balustrade; beyond were bedroom doors, above a pent-roof carried on oaken posts. Sheets clean enough for further use, and blankets airing, hung across the rail; a screen insufficient to hide a chambermaid emptying bedroom pots into a bucket.

"Has your ship a place like that?"

"The *Cormorant*? Oh, dear no! She's only an 18-gun sloop."

"'Tis a pity," Emy responded with feeling.

It was another hot morning. The sun blazed from a vivid sky, not a breath of wind disturbed wisps of straw lying about the yard, or ruffled the feathers of a brown cock and three white hens scratching in the dung-heap. An air of expectancy became noticeable; an ostler opened wider the big gates; a groom exercising a couple of riding-horses drew them to one side; gentlemen breakfasting in the coffee-room glanced through the windows. A fat, swarthy woman wearing a pink print dress and a mob cap waddled from the kitchen to an oak rostrum outside the coffee-room. Stretching upwards, she grasped a string attached to a brass bell.

"When I came from Chester I travelled by waggon," Emy volunteered.

"Very slow, wasn't it?"

"Two miles an hour, or three when the road was good. Passengers slept at 'hedge' inns for a penny a night."

An old gentleman and his son, emerging from the coffee-room, discussed the riots as they walked up and down. Captain Payne strolled across the yard and politely accosted the younger man: "Have you the latest news?"

"Newgate is burned to the ground; Akerman's house reduced to a mere shell. More than three hundred prisoners were released and carried off on horseback; four were to have been excuted to-morrow."

The old gentleman's voice interrupted in wrathful crescendo: "Good God! Where were the military? Where were the constables? Where were the citizens? Why were the 'prentices unmindful of their traditions?"

"Can't think to what the country is coming, Sir!" Captain Payne feelingly responded. Handsome and gallant in his blue-and-white uniform, he looked much younger than his twenty-six years.

The old man angrily stamped up and down. "We're going to the dogs, Sir! We're going to the dogs!"

A fanfare, rumbling wheels and horses galloping sounded without. Ostlers ran from the stables, the woman in the pink print jangled the brass bell. Lurching and creaking, the Portsmouth coach entered the inn yard.

Emy stood apart, with the chickens clucking and pecking around her blue silk petticoat. In an adjacent shed an elderly man in a baize apron and white paper cap polished shoes with an old brown bagwig. His face was weathered and chapped, he had a bulbous

nose and watering, sad, pale eyes. Every time Emy glanced his way he smiled in a wistful, pleading manner and touched his paper head-dress with edge of the blacking-brush. His air of defeat and humility disturbed Emy's soft heart. Purposefully she turned and walked towards the coach, pretending to be unaware of his tearful, faded eyes appealingly following her disdainful back.

The coach was constructed of dull black leather thickly studded, by way of ornament, with broad-headed black nails. Semi-circular in shape, it hung on immense front and back springs, which caused it to resemble a fat spider balanced on long, bent legs. Four oval windows lighted each side. On a narrow boot, covered by a spreading hammer-cloth luxuriantly fringed, an impressive coachman in green livery sat beside a thin, dyspeptic guard who clutched a carbine. A large basket attached to the back of the coach by iron bars overhung the big red wheels. In this receptacle several poor travellers were uncomfortably huddled. Three brown horses were harnessed by lengthy traces to the vehicle; on the back of the leader rode a postilion in a green riding-coat and cocked hat.

Four vacant places remained. While the old gentleman was assisted up the high step and the brass bell clanged a reminder to the missing traveller, Captain Payne stood by Emy and awkwardly held her hand.

"I shall always remember our time together, Emy. 'Tis certain your lovely face and pretty, kind ways will be rewarded by good treatment." Thrusting upon her a small white package which had become hot and damp in his hand he gruffly added: "That's all I've got; I would 'twere more; but I've given you Harry Fetherstone's address, so you'll be secure." Stooping, he administered a hasty kiss, a caress that fell smartly on the side of Emy's nose. "We'll meet again," he promised; "all will be as it was."

The guard sounded his horn. Stepping back to her old place, Emy watched the coach drive away. As the wheels rolled in and out of ruts, so the heads behind the windows nodded back and forth. The postilion took the gate in a wide curve; basket and rear wheels disappeared from view.

Eddies of dust and straw slowly subsided. Quietness that had the quality of substance settled upon the inn yard. The brass bell still swung, but the woman who rang it had gone indoors; sheets and blankets no longer festooned the balustrade; ostlers and horses had vanished. The cock found a worm and clucked an invitation to his

hens; the man cleaning shoes emerged from the shed and stood like an automaton, raising the blacking-brush to the edge of his paper cap.

Emy slowly moved away; her skirt lispd upon the pavement, her pink slippers, worn and soiled by hard service, stumbled among the uneven cobblestones. As she passed under the archway to the street, she glanced back. Holding the brown bagwig in one hand and the blacking-brush in the other, the old manservant stood in the sunlight wistfully watching her with rheumy eyes. Gravely, pitifully, she blew a kiss.

Emy had no plans for her future other than a determination to spend the day amid fields and hedges. Since leaving Dr. Budd's she had become better acquainted with the town's topography; jaunts with Captain Payne had shown her farms and hay-fields within half-a-mile of Oxford Road.

Crossing Piccadilly, she took the first northward alley, which brought her by devious twists into Great Swallow Street. She ventured without her usual temerity; dependence upon a lover had impaired her courage. The gay audacity that had carried her through the first day of the riots was replaced by reflection; in retrospect lawless episodes and hazards lost glamour, she felt no pride in the parts she had played; between her and the sunny sky bestial faces of Newgate prisoners intervened like a grim transparency. Depression, heavy as a leaden weight, robbed her footsteps of buoyancy. She was friendless and alone in a wicked city. . . . What would she do now? . . . Good God, what *could* she do? . . .

The character of Great Swallow Street was not assuring. The long, irregular thoroughfare was fringed with stables, pawnshops, taverns and lottery offices. Dwelling-houses had degenerated into trade premises; pigs' trotters, pease pudding, tripe, darned woollen stockings cut up for tinder-making, rush-lights and dipped candles were offered for sale behind bow windows. Near Chapel Court a white glove tied to a door knocker announced a birth; at the junction of Great Swallow Street with the Oxford Road a band of drummers serenaded with trumpets a bridal chamber; passing through the crowd, Emy emerged into the wide highway running from Tyburn to Bloomsbury.

Adjoining Portland Place she found a meadow golden with buttercups and established herself on a knoll. To the north, across the dusty new road from Paddington to Islington, a draughtboard panorama of fields and hedges, woods and isolated mansions extended to the

heights of Hampstead, Highgate and Primrose Hill. To the east, Tottenham Court Road lay like a white ribbon across undulating country and marshlands gleaming in the sun; westward sporadic outbreaks of bricks and mortar, and the trees in Marylebone Gardens blocked all further view. A haze of smoke hung over the town. Roofs and church spires stretched into the blue distance. Here and there flames flickered; near Soho Square the shell of a large mansion was lit by a furnace raging within.

Emy had a tree stump to sit upon and a mole-hill for a footstool. Scented petals from a hawthorn tree dropped into her lap; a lark sang in the clouds; white butterflies flickered and waltzed in the balmy air.

Unfastening Captain Payne's packet, she found it contained three shillings and a message:

"You are a charming creature, Emy and worthy of a settled situation; this I think you may find with Fetherstone. He is good-natured, but easily takes offence. If you remember to treat his dignity with respect you will do very well. Address Sir Harry at Uppark, Sussex, and until you join him steer clear of common entanglements. Herewith is the last of the money. On my next leave I hope again to enjoy the pleasure of yr embraces; till that happy time arrives I am, dear Emy, yrs most faithfully, *John Willett Payne.*"

For some time Emy sat looking at the letter; then she put it at the bottom of a small fancy bandbox that held her brush, comb and night shift. The more she thought of Sir Harry, the less she liked him. Anyway, a girl with three shillings in her stocking had time to make up her mind. . . .

Despite precarious prospects, she spent an agreeable hour watching Portland Place uprising from fields and plantations. A wide thoroughfare had been driven through a farm; newly dug foundations surrounded doomed cow-sheds; a barn, two elms and a duck-pond occupied the prospective site of a pilastered mansion. Sounds of hammering, of metal clinking on stone, and of voices, drifted cheerfully across the meadow. Silence came at noon; workmen climbed the field fence and sat down to eat their dinner amid the long grass.

Emy realized she was hungry. Standing up, she scanned the country from Tottenham Court to Battle Bridge and the Foundling Hospital; she saw taverns and turnpikes, Whitefields Chapel and Baltimore

House, but the nearest building resembling a farm lay a mile away, near the grounds of Montagu House.

Picking up her bandbox, she took an oblique course towards Great Russell Street. A turnip field and a stony lane proved gruelling for flimsy shoes, brambles took toll of her petticoat, her hoop suffered in an encounter with a stile. Suddenly, for no reason, there flashed into her mind a memory-picture of Dr. James Graham leaving his lodgings in Chatham Place. So vivid was recollection that she saw again his full, handsome, self-confident face; his prosperous protuberance of person; his costly black clothes. With the vision came an echo: "Would you like to earn three pounds a month?"

Emy's unstable temperament took an upward tilt; wealth, work and security lay ahead. Her future assumed a pattern definite as the landscape.



CHAPTER SIX

BY enlisting the aid of Mary Mudge, Emy hoped for a speedy interview with Dr. Graham, but anxiety to escape the vigilance of Mrs. Budd obliged her to delay the project until nightfall.

She approached the City by way of Broad St. Giles and High Holborn—thoroughfares that were unfamiliar. The riots had drained the streets of people. Law-abiding citizens chalked "No Popery" on their shutters and barricaded themselves in their houses; others, with nothing to lose and everything to gain, had vacated the cellars and tenements of St. Giles to skirmish and loot with the Protestant Army.

Emy had no company but the sound of her own footsteps. The long, lonely street lay shadowy and dim; now and again a cat streaked across the pavement or a lean dog scavenged in the gutter; at Middle Row she overtook a watchman shuffling painfully on gouty feet. Projecting fronts of gabled houses nearly met overhead, to be succeeded by flat-faced modern dwellings crowned with regiments of chimneys; at the corner of Castle Yard the blackened shell of a large building radiated heat and a smell of charred wood.

On reaching the summit of Holborn Hill, Emy saw a pulsing salmon-pink reflection on the sky which increased momentarily to an angry red glare. As she descended, so the familiar murmur of the mob fell upon her ears. She walked slowly, torn betwixt a newly developed squeamishness and her normal inclination to enter every affray. Curiosity triumphed; she ran as fast as long skirts permitted towards the conflagration.

At Holborn Bridge she beheld the most spectacular blaze achieved during the riots. Flames of blue, green and purple roared through the roof of Mr. Langdale's distillery; every few seconds casks exploded and flames leapt higher. Against the roar of the fire beat the roar

of the mob. Huzzaing, cursing, fighting, they surged over the pavement and over each other. Men and women lay along the gutters lapping up raw spirits. When they became too drunk to fight and snarl, newcomers kicked them away and usurped their places. Before the stream of brandy threatened to run dry, ringleaders broke fresh casks and let the contents flow.

Emy's insatiable appetite for adventure and hazard urged her forward. Keeping within the shadows, she got as close to the distillery as the heat allowed. She was unnoticed. Variegated lights cast by rainbow flames played on distorted faces. Glassy-eyed women, arms interlinked, solemnly staggered in an ungainly dance to a moaned accompaniment. Men shouted, quarrelled, embraced, fell down. Children, sprawling on the pavement, made mud pies and dabbled their hands in gin and rum.

The smell of spirits was overwhelming. Emy's head began to swim and she felt herself reeling drunkenly. She forgot caution and elbowing her way among the liquor-maddened people, attempted to reach the comparative quietness of the Fleet Market. The hot stench of unwashed bodies, burning spirits, smoke and charred wood augmented her distress. Panic seized her; struggling frantically, she tried to batter through the mass of yielding flesh. A movement like a shudder rippled through the crowd; shots rang out. Emy lost her foothold and rocked this way and that with the eddying throng. Sometimes she was squeezed upwards and looked down on ugly, contorted faces, then, tossed sideways, she was in danger of falling and being trampled underfoot. Upraised, she saw the King's Guard holding Holborn Hill, Saffron Hill and Snow Hill, while the Military Foot Association barred escape by the Fleet Market. Submerged and struggling to preserve her life, she could only gauge the actions of the military by the recoil or advance of her neighbours. In a stampede towards the Fleet she found herself borne upwards against a wrought-iron lamp-post. In a moment she grasped an ornamental scroll around the oil container, and, pulling herself up, swung out of danger above the surging mob. Pandemonium raged. The Guards fired volleys, women screamed, men huzza'd and cursed. Hisses came from every direction, and with the roar of the fire, still fiercely burning, predominated over all other sounds.

Emy found foothold on a narrow cross-bar, and so eased her aching arms. Her position, though much improved, was still far from enviable. In the scrimmage she had lost her bandbox and her pink

silk cape and hood, her dress was torn to ribbons, her hoop, broken in fragments, poked, like fractured bones, through her petticoat.

The rioters were experiencing defeat. With levelled muskets, the Guards marched companies of men, women and children down Snow Hill to the Poultry Compter, the only prison in London that had not been attacked. Either by design, or through carelessness, Holborn Hill was left unguarded, and the mob lost no time in profiting by the omission. Soon all that remained of the lately straggling concourse lay killed, wounded, dying or too drunk to move.

Holborn Bridge and Mr. Langdale's yard resembled a battleground. Dark humps dotted the pavement; transparent blue flames licked and curled around the cobblestones where spirits had ignited. A prostrate woman's brandy-drenched skirt caught alight and blazed like a flambeau; she moaned and feebly moved; the stench of singed flesh amalgamated with other smells.

Members of the Military Foot Association left their position across the Fleet conduit and advanced over the bridge; in passing they gave each black hummock a prod with a musket. A white-haired, burly man stopped at the foot of Emy's lamp-post and ordered her down.

Obediently she attempted to descend, but her arms were so numbed it was pain to disengage them from the ironwork. "If you'll catch me 'twill be a kind act, for indeed I'm stiff enough to fall and break every bone in my body."

"And no loss to the country, either, you young baggage!"

Seeing she was to get no help, Emy clambered down as best she might. On the ground she contested his remark: "*Duwch!* You're too old to talk so foolish. Because you see me up a lamp-post you count me a rioter, whereas if you had sense you'd reason I'd climbed there to escape. Good God! What's the use of a fine uniform if no brains go with it?"

Emy's speech was not calculated to mollify a prosperous merchant sacrificing convenience to duty. Without deigning a response, he took her by the shoulders and propelled her to the gates of the Fleet Market. They were opened to his knock and she was thrust within.

Emy was well acquainted with her surroundings from having promenaded between the stalls with baby Richard in her arms and little Henry Budd dragging at her skirts. Built on land gained when the Fleet Ditch was covered, the market occupied the centre of a wide thoroughfare that connected the Holborn and the Fleet Bridges. Gates, enclosing it at either end, rendered the place a valuable depor

and canteen for the military bivouacked in the city. Instead of fish, meat and vegetables, the open-fronted shops were filled with accoutrements and provisions. Butchers' slabs formed a table in the middle of the narrow alley; over a glowing brazier a young private frizzled sausages in a battered warming-pan. Emy's sudden appearance so startled him that only by her dexterous intervention was an accident averted.

She addressed him peremptorily: "Take me to the farther gate and unlock it. Your officer thinks I'll be safer coming through the market than following the road outside."

Emy feared her ruse might fail, but not in vain had she studied the manner and diction of the gentry. She traversed the market rapidly, and left it as easily as she had entered.

Great changes had occurred during her absence. The Fleet Prison, last seen as a massive, impregnable building, was now a blackened shell surrounding an area of ashes, twisted iron and tumbled stones. Taverns and shops interested in catering for prisoners and their families were shuttered and dark. Messengers, dragged women and turnkeys off duty who commonly loitered about Ludgate, had decamped with their clients.

Lonely echoes again accompanied Emy's footsteps; New Bridge Street was wide and solitary to walk as the highway to eternity. The wrought-iron gates of the Bridewell were standing open; a thing she had never seen before. Although not easily daunted, she began to react to the eerie atmosphere of the ravaged town; her footsteps pattered faster and faster, and she entered Chatham Place at a run.

The spectacle it presented was not reassuring. Flames devoured the toll houses and gates of Blackfriars Bridge; against the fiery background black figures capered and shouted. Having sufficient knowledge of such demonstrations to be shy of becoming involved in another, Emy dived like a frightened rabbit down the area steps of number four.

Confronted by the forbidding wooden door and the bars of the kitchen window, she was at a loss how to make her presence known to Mary Mudge, whose bedroom was the back cellar. Slipping her hand between the bars, she drummed on the glass, and, finding this ineffectual, she knocked on the door. Seconds stretched into minutes; Emy's furtive tapping developed into bangs produced with the heel of her slipper. Possibly she would have been less bold had not the triumphant shouts and yells of the rioters deadened her ears to the

sounds she was making. Wearied at last and resigned to spending the night in the area, she leant against the chilly wall facing the kitchen window. Presently she detected a gleam from a shaded rush-light coming from the farther cellar. Immediately she approached her lips to the bars and cried: "'Tis Emy Lyon, wanting to see you. Let me in, there's a good creature, for I'm shivering with cold."

No response came from within, although Emy still could see a faint glow across the kitchen. Suddenly she bethought herself of the special knock adopted by Jane Farmer when returning late from a playhouse—a signal known to the inquisitive Mary. Emy made it on the window, and was rewarded by seeing her friend's pale, affrighted face peering through the glass. Again she cried: "'Tis Emy Lyon, waiting to see you. Let me in, there's a good creature, for I'm starving with cold."

Mary unbolted the door just as shots rang out at the bridge. Grabbing Emy, she pulled her inside. Men raced along the pavement; Chatham Place echoed to the discharge of muskets. Pressing close to the window, both girls saw feet racing along the top of the area. A man, howling as he ran, stumbled, toppled half-way down the steps and lay still.

"He's a corpse," Mary observed with gloomy satisfaction.

"Poor thing! 'tis to be hoped he has no wife and children to grieve for him."

"If you'd seen as many nipped off as I have, you'd waste no pity. We breed so fast London wouldn't hold us unless we was kept down by accidents and pests."

Emy's pride was stung. "I've seen more killed and wounded since the riots than you've ever done."

Mary peered at her, then she went to fetch the rush-light. Meanwhile Emy watched the soldiers lift the dead man and carry him away.

Under scrutiny she began to feel embarrassed about her appearance. Her fine dress proclaimed the vicissitudes it had suffered, and she was not confident that she herself bore no marks of experience.

"That's the best Spitalfields silk," Mary pronounced.

"The gownd cost all of five guineas."

"Looks the kind of thing a gentleman 'u'd buy. 'Tis made in pretty taste, I must say."

"'Tis spoilt now, and I've lost the pink tippet that went with it, and my bandbox of trifles."

"Perhaps the gentleman who gave will buy more?"

"I never said anything about a gentleman."

"Tisn't to be supposed you could pay for silk and lace." Mary's voice betrayed excitement, envy, respect and theoretical condemnation.

Emy answered irrelevantly: "I've tasted the waters of Bagnigge Wells and walked in the Rotunda at Ranelagh. I've seen duck-hunting, and the King and the Prince of Wales."

"With all that behind you, what's brought you back to Chatham Place?"

"The need to earn money. Dr. Graham offered me three pounds a month to work for him, and 'tis all the prospect I have of an honest living, seeing I wouldn't go back to Mrs. Budd if she was to ask me on her bended knees."

"She won't do that. 'Tis my belief she was glad to be rid of you and Jane Farmer."

"Has Jane gone too?"

"Yes, walked out and left the dinner to burn; she's serving play-house folk in Norfolk Street."

Emy yawned. Now she came to think of it, she felt fit to drop. . . .

"If you let me share your bed to-night I'll be up early to do your steps and catch Dr. Graham as he leaves the house."

"How can you mop and scour in a dress fit for Queen Charlotte?"

"I'd sacrifice more than my gown to be put in the way of earning board and lodging."

Mary regarded her curiously. "You've slept soft in a gentleman's arms, maybe you've forgotten honest labour buys only a straw bed and ragged covers?"

"'Tis weariness that brings sound sleep."

Lying beside Mary on the lumpy, fusty-smelling paillasse, Emy found she had been mistaken. The vaulted small cellar was more like a sepulchre than a bed-chamber. Once the bricks had been lime-washed, but grime had subdued whiteness to grey uniformity, only interrupted by a sooty patch above the rush-light and the silver tracks of slugs lacing this way and that like a tinsel net. The feeble illumination was insufficient to penetrate into corners, but it showed a tiny barred window high up at one end, and in a recess opposite the bed an enormous box-mangle still saturated after Monday's washing. The only other furniture was a broken chair heaped with a dirty linsey-woolsey quilted petticoat, a pair of leather stays and a print

dress belonging to Mary, and Emy's silk gown and lawn petticoat.

Thinking of the plumed silken bed at Mrs. Hayes's, and the crimson curtained four-poster at Nerot's Hotel, Emy was swept by despair. Whatever would she do? Good God, what *could* she do? . . .

A few hours' sleep and a ray of sunshine restored her optimism. Cautiously she slipped out of bed and dressed as far as her petticoat, then, carrying her gown over her arm, she went in search of needle and thread. Emy was a good sempstress, and with the aid of a skein of floss purloined from Mrs. Tarraway's work-table, repaired all rents in her gown; she even succeeded in mending her hoop by binding together the broken cane, but not all her skill could remove stains and a sheen of dirt that subdued the colour of the silk.

Mary awakened unwillingly. Scratching her head—always most troublesome first thing in the morning—she came sulkily into the kitchen. Without acknowledging Emy's salutation she whipped up a pail and clattered out to the area; the wheeze and squeak of the pump handle awakened familiar memories. Canting sideways under the brimming weight, Mary splashed across the kitchen and flung the water into an iron receptacle adjoining the fire.

"If your Dr. Graham had to carry his own bath-water he'd be less eager to wash his body. Un-Christian, I calls it, to soap yourself all over every day. My mother never's had a bath in her life, yet she's borne nineteen children and buried seventeen. Some sickness will fall on the doctor, mark my words, what with over-washing and sleeping with his winder open. Ignorance, I calls it!"

"What time is best for me to see him, Mary dear?" said Emy in conciliatory tones. She was obliged to repeat the question because Mary made so much clatter with the grate.

"He drinks a tumbler-glass of boiled water, if you'll believe it, before he goes out. You can take it up to him, and welcome!"

Mrs. Tarraway was a late riser, thus Emy's presence was unlikely to be discovered before she had a definite plan for the future. Cautioned by Mary to remain indoors, Emy found employment in cleaning knives, candlesticks, and in removing, with the aid of brown paper and a hot flat-iron, grease spilled on the parlour carpet. Into these services she put all her energy, hoping to overcome trepidation. At last the moment came when, glass in hand, she must tap on the doctor's door. Her knock, loud and firm, sounded to her own ears like musket shots.

Dr. Graham, with his back to the room, stood arranging his cravat

before the mirror. Black silk stockings and fine cloth breeches displayed to advantage shapely muscular calves, sturdy thighs and buttocks; a lawn shirt, pouched at the waist, disguised the thickness of his torso. He did not turn when Emy entered. To emphasize the change of handmaiden she made her skirts rustle and tapped the floor with her high heels. Eventually she was driven to say a polite: "Good morning."

Swinging round, he looked her up and down. "What do you want?" he brusquely demanded.

"To have the work you offered me."

"What did I offer?"

Emy's temper rose. "Three pound a month, and compared with what others earn, 'tis not so much."

"As fees for a strumpet, perhaps? You've lost value, my girl. Last week you were fresh and dewy as a spring morning, and worth three pounds a month to me. To-day you're despoiled, and I can find dozens like you in Exeter Street glad to come for a guinea."

Emy felt she had received a vital wound; strength and courage ebbed, leaving a mere shell to quail under Dr. Graham's searching eyes. Trembling she walked to the door.

As she grasped the knob he spoke again: "I've no wish to be harsh, so I'll give ye two pounds ten shillings so long as ye carry out my wishes and conduct yourself with discretion."

Despite professed indifference, he watched her anxiously as she hesitated. Admiration, impersonal and contemplative, showed in his face. Impulsively he crossed the room and patted her shoulder. "Poor little fool! burdened with such beauty 'twould take a wise head to escape disaster."

His kind words brought tears to her eyes which, rolling down her cheeks, added to her loveliness. As if ashamed of a sentimental lapse, Dr. Graham returned to his dressing. Assuming his sober black waistcoat, he buttoned it across his full figure.

"You'll attend to-morrow at the Temple of Health to be instructed in your duties. You will be required to display yourself at lectures and other assemblies, and possibly to sing each evening. On nights when the Grand Celestial State Bed is occupied it will be your task to receive the lady and prepare her by soothing conversation for the miraculous magnetic action of the electric couch."

Emy returned to the kitchen with mixed feelings; relief was qualified by resentment.

"What's he offered?" Toasting wafer-like pieces of bread, Mary spoke without looking round, and was therefore unprepared for a torrent of tears. Emy, her face hidden in her arms, lay across the table and sobbed in noisy abandon.

Mary supplied unexpected comfort. Placing a bony arm around Emy's heaving shoulders, she said soothingly: "There now, don't take on, but tell old Mary all about it. Was he unkind, then? Never mind, 'twill all be the same in a hundred years!"

Thus admonished, Emy sat up and dried her eyes. "One man wants love and another virtue; 'tis difficult for a woman to know how to please."

"I thought the doctor was like the rest, and 'twould not be work he'd offer."

"But it was! I'm to have two pound ten a month; last Friday 'twould have been three pound."

"Skinflint! He knocks off three shillun from his weekly bill because he takes no breakfast. Is he paying in advance?"

"No."

"Then how are you to live till wages are due?"

Emy's spirits sank to zero. "Perhaps Mrs. Tarraway would let me sleep with you, and I could pay something later."

"That she wouldn't; she called you a wanton before; if she saw you now the name would be worse."

"What will I do?" Emy's lovely eyes, drowned in tears, looked up for guidance.

Mary was enjoying herself—the rôle of monitor did something to level the balance between them. Screwing up her ugly sallow face to denote concentrated thought, she stood silently biting her finger. "Well, there's my mother in Portugal Street; she might take you to lodge on trust, and 'twould be handy for the Temple of Health."

"Dear, kind Mary to think of such a plan. I couldn't endure to wander again homeless through the streets."

"I don't promise anything!" Emphasis was given to the proviso by the stringent ringing of Mrs. Tarraway's bell. The girls looked up at it jerking and tossing on its coiled spring.

"Forgotten her toast." Mary was laconic. Going to the fire, she retrieved the bread from the ashes, dusted it on her sleeve, and held it again to the glowing coal. "I'll tell her we've no yeast, and 'tis baking day. If I'm clever she'll send me to the brewery in Clare Market, quite close to my home"

Mary carried her scheme into effect, but not so simply as she anticipated. Due to the riots, Mrs. Tarraway showed a disposition to be timorous and in need of companionship. Fortunately Mrs. Budd's plight was yet more forlorn, and at noon she sent an urgent invitation to her neighbor to come and partake of Purl Royal, a certain insurance against the vapours.

No sooner had she gone than Mary hurriedly exchanged her print for the stuff dress she wore abroad. The girls left the house by the area, as the least conspicuous exit, which necessitated taking a key nearly as large as those of Newgate which Emy had helped to submerge.

Blackfriars Bridge was held by the City Militia and Chatham Place had a battered appearance. Pieces of the toll-house were scattered over the roadway, windows had been broken, a pool of blood marked the spot where the rioter had fallen.

Mary assumed the timid, ultra-genteel bearing she had adopted on their previous outing, but as there was no Ephraim Gibson to impress, she soon abandoned it for Cockney camaraderie. Both she and Emy exchanged gay sallies with the soldiers on guard outside the Bridewell and at Fleet Bridge; passing Whitefriars, Mary brought herself into disfavour with an officer of the Military Foot Association by imitating his swaggering strut. In wild, noisy behaviour she and Emy vied with each other, and between them they attracted sufficient attention to satisfy even Emy's love of being conspicuous.

Just before Temple Bar, Mary swerved to the right and entered Shire Lane, a filthy passage so narrow that only foot-passengers could penetrate to the network of courts and alleys beyond. The old gabled houses were built high and close together, with upper parts projecting over the lower, thus reducing to a minimum the supply of light and air. In the gloom thus created a teeming population conducted its nefarious concerns and the business of living, loving and begetting.

"'Tis a bad part," Mary observed; "among thieves and beggars 'tis known as 'Rogues' Lane'. When there's a big hanging at Tyburn, one from these courts nearly always 'rides up the heavy hill', tho' 'tis said 'twas a fashionable place when Queen Anne ruled."

Emy feared that her pilgrimage might end in one of the noisome alleys, and was much relieved when, after crossing Carey Street and rounding the corner by the classically designed doorposts of Searle's Coffee House, they entered a comparatively wide and airy thoroughfare. On the northern side of Portugal Street the brick-and-stone

façade of Lincoln's Inn Theatre uprose boldly from low houses and small shops. Opposite the playhouse a narrow lane ran between the 'Grange Inn' on the one hand, the parish roundhouse and a burial-ground on the other.

Emy's volatile spirits being extinguished, she soberly followed Mary down the muddy lane to a mean, two-storeyed dwelling tucked betwixt guard-room and graveyard. The house door, opening outwards, was latched by a bit of coffin-wood that swivelled on a brass nail. Mary gave a twist to this device, and the girls found themselves in a small, sour-smelling kitchen.

Mrs. Mudge, a woman with shrivelled limbs attached to a body distended and sagging through child-bearing, stood ironing a fine lace-and-cambric shirt. Similar garments, smoothed and folded, were piled on one end of the table; in a clothes-basket on the floor, rolls of damped linen awaited attention. Between the closed window and a hot fire Mr. Mudge sat in a winged chair. His legs, swathed and padded with countless dingy dressings, rested on a pillow, his bloated hands and face had the crêpy, saturated appearance of flesh after long immersion in soap suds. The sour smell permeating the air emanated from his corner of the kitchen.

Mary saluted her parents with smacking kisses before presenting Emy: "You remember me telling about Emy Lyon, and how she disappeared on the first day of the riots? Well, she came back last night just as men were a-killing of each other at Blackfriars Bridge, and now she wants somewheres to bide because she's got employed by Dr. James Graham for the Temple of Health. Emy'll pay for her bed after she gets her wages at the end of the month, and Tom can give his room up and sleep here afore the fire. 'Twill be handy for Emy to nip down Drury Lane to the Adelphi."

Mrs. Mudge pursed her mouth, a suspicious, calculating expression glinted in her small, weak eyes. "She must pay double—I can't be out of pocket all that time unless 'tis made up."

"What do you want for the room?" Emy inquired.

Mrs. Mudge exchanged the chilled iron for a hot one. "Two shillun a week if yer pays before yer sleeps; four shillun if yer sleeps first and pays after." For emphasis she spat on the smoothing-iron; the spittle sizzled, smoked and produced small, sharp explosions.

Emy considered the terms excessive, but was disarmed by Mary, who evinced delight that the arrangement was so satisfactorily completed.

"I must go in a few minutes, or the old cat will be home and find me out with the key. Come up and I'll show you yer bed." Opening a low door beside the fireplace, she disclosed a steep, winding stair.

The room was small and the bed large; only a narrow pathway was left around the walls. Bed and superstructure, home-made of sycamore wood, resembled scaffolding for a gallows rather than a four-poster. There were no curtains or attempt at upholstery other than was provided by a pair of patched breeches and an overcoat of the kind worn by watchmen, thrown over the tester.

A tiny window overlooked the Green Ground, and, more remotely, the backs of houses in Clement's Lane. The burial-ground occupied about a third of an acre, and was originally surrounded by high walls, but the level having been raised on several occasions, tombstones now topped the coping. Skulls, bones and bits of coffins littered the surface. A digger, up to his knees in an open grave, worked surreptitiously under a tent of sacking, attended by a youth with a basket, who went back and forth to the bone-house at the south-west extremity of the round.

"It must be clearing day," Mary observed. "That's my brother with the basket. Tom was took on after father caught the 'rot'. 'Tis a good job while it lasts; father, as chief digger, could always make an extra five shillun a week from brass plates and nails."

Blank despair settled upon Emy. Frantically she thought of rushing from the house to try her luck in the streets, but was restrained by knowing what could happen there. . . .

Mary flung her arms round Emy's shoulders and gave her a congratulatory squeeze. "You'll be comfortable here," she promised; "there's always something going on. Hardly a night passes without a funeral, and in winter 'tis a picture to see the torches."

Downstairs warmed ale awaited them. Mr. Mudge had a brimming mug on a board across his knees. His wife knelt beside him packing ironed shirts into a basket. Every now and then she paused to lift the mug to his puffy lips.

"Whose shirts, Mum?" Mary inquired.

"Mr. Linley's."

Mary answered with a puzzled frown. "'Tis in my mind that Jane Farmer went to serve Mr. Linley."

"Where does he live?" Emy eagerly demanded.

Mrs. Mudge unfavourably surveyed her guest. "Addresses of my gentlemen remains safe with me."

"And Jane's nothink but a hussy, and yer best rid of her," Mary contributed with a superior air.

In order to learn the quickest way to the Adelphi, Emy followed Mary through a network of small courts similar to those traversed earlier in the afternoon, and emerged above Craven House in Drury Lane. Mansion and street recalled to Emy her journey in Mr. Sheridan's sedan-chair. The memory, which seemed remote by the length of a year rather than a week, brought with it poignant regret. A week ago she had tasted passion, gaiety, luxury; the future held only loneliness and squalor.

At the corner of Holywell Street she bade good-bye to her friend and tearfully watched her flitting figure until it disappeared behind the pilasters of St. Mary's Church. Emy turned back; hopeless misery was her companion past the taverns and pawn-shops of Drury Lane and the tenements and brothels fringing the byways.

A sharp drizzle began to fall as she regained Portugal Street. Pulling open the door of her lodging, she was assailed by the hot, sour smell of the kitchen, qualified by an aroma of gin.

Mrs. Mudge had put away her ironing, and sat by the table watching her son grading scores of teeth spilled from a dirty leather bag. Sometimes she intervened and with a gnarled forefinger rearranged the specimens in nicer order.

"If yer mixes yeller with white, the Jew'll say all are yeller, and pay less. Gentry wishing to replace their teeth wants the white ones of youth; 'twould pay us better to offer only prime teeth, and leave t'others where they belong."

Sleepy and dull with drink, the youth looked at Emy with incurious eyes. Her wide skirts tipped and swung against mean furniture and cramped walls as she made her way to the fireplace and opened the door upon the cockle-stair. The silence of the three people, and the hostility of their watchful eyes, followed her like a menace.

Upstairs she edged her way around the bed to the window and looked out. Rain pattered briskly, slate tombstones that had looked dull and shabby shone with a pewter gleam, trampled grass lay less flatly, scattered bones and skulls were whiter, only a fat rat skulking in a broken calathus looked the worse for the drenching.



CHAPTER SEVEN

EMY was an apt pupil, and quickly learnt the part she was to play at the Temple of Health. Dressed in a Grecian robe, with her chestnut hair flowing to her sandalled feet, it was her duty to appear, illuminated within a massive gilded frame, at the conclusion of Dr. Graham's evening lectures. When the discourse was upon the improvement of the human species, she held a lighted Roman lamp as a symbol; when the theme was fecundity, her arms embraced a large cornucopia filled with the fruits of Covent Garden market. In either representation she was placed between a black velvet curtain and candles attached to the inside of the frame at an angle invisible to spectators. The lighting up of the candles and Emy's appearance had to synchronize, or the effect was spoilt, and her first day at Adelphi Terrace was spent in acquiring unity with the taper-bearers. In a short time she was promoted to singing a cantata on health and beauty at the Thursday night assemblies; from thence it was but a short step to receiving the ladies destined to benefit from the vitalizing properties of the Grand Celestial State Bed.

This gigantic structure, made by Denton, a tinman of mechanical genius, was erected in a room over the Great Apollo Apartment, where the receptions and lectures took place. The bed, twelve feet long and nine feet wide, was supported by forty glass pillars "Invisibly incrustrated," as Dr. Graham informed disappointed husbands, "with transparent varnish in order to render insulation more complete so that we may have even in unsuitable weather abundance of electrical fire."

A fifty-pound bank note procured for one night conjugal tenancy of the bed, wherein "children of the most perfect beauty could be begotten".

Naturally a husband did not go to this expense until the efficacy of

the ancestral four-poster had persistently failed; he kept the appointment at Royal Terrace in a complex mood of exasperation and stubborn determination.

The arrival of prospective parents was arranged to coincide with the sequela to the evening lecture, when Dr. Graham answered health questions and the company were regaled with tea, capillaire and orgeat handed round by two footmen of extraordinary stature. It was then Emy's duty to slip down to the ground floor reception-room and wait among crutches, ear-trumpets, spectacles and other appliances left as tributes by grateful patients, for sounds of a coach drawing up outside. This was the signal for her to tinkle a bell, which brought young Dr. Mitford, the "Officiating Junior Priest", from the cellar where he concocted "Electrical Æther", "Nervous Ætherial", "Elixir of Life", and "Imperial Pills". Together they received the guests. Covered with confusion, Dr. Mitford would conduct the husband to a handsomely furnished dressing-room in the basement, while Emy led the wife upstairs and introduced her to a withdrawing room behind the Sanctum Sanctorum which usurped most of the second floor.

Emy had been instructed in a formula for the occasion, but after trying the speech once, she abandoned it for an improvised discourse suited to each individual. Usually Dr. Graham's clients were noblemen, or rich squires, and their wives apologetic women cowed by persistent reproaches. Driving to the Adelphi, they had heard much of the fifty-pound bank note paid in advance for the night's experiment, information which increased trepidation and distaste for an undesired adventure.

Emy's kind nature devised a programme whereby the Celestial Bed was divested of its mysterious and therefore sinister features. She warned the victim to prepare for the mattress suddenly inclining at an angle like Holborn Hill, for peals upon the organ and silvery blasts from trumpets concealed among the figures crowning the looking-glass dome. A cup of tea, smuggled upstairs by one of the footmen, and a Holloway cheese-cake brought from the horseman who sold them in the streets, completed Emy's homely ministrations, and so fortified the lady that she was able to join her husband with customary duty.

After the pair were safely shut in, Emy beckoned the waiting lackeys, who, in felt slippers, crept upstairs to a dark closet adjoining the Magnético-Electrical Bed; an apartment, according to Dr. Graham's advertisements: "fitted up with the great cylinder which

produces the celestial fire and vivifying influences". The men applied themselves to turning the big wheels that supplied air to the organ and mechanical orchestra and power to agitate the figures of Psyche, Hymen, loves and graces on top of the dome. When the whole apparatus was in motion, Emy was free to quit the establishment and bang the door behind her.

The Temple of Health was one of the three central houses in Royal Terrace, the others being occupied by Mrs. Garrick, and the Adelphi architects, Mr. Robert and Mr. James Adam. Dr. Graham had acquired a short tenancy of number six on very advantageous terms. Despite commodious proportions and an airy situation, the beautiful houses were not in demand, owing to the muddy Thames water periodically flooding the cellars. The economical rent had enabled the doctor to supplement the rich ornamentation of the rooms with lavish purchases of stained glass and mirrors. A source of much of his inspiration was the ceiling in the Great Apollo Apartment: made of plaster-work, it was decorated with medallions by Antonio Zucchi. The central painting depicted Apollo in pursuit of Daphne; four smaller panels showed the god crowned with evergreen leaves. The same room had a white marble chimney-piece with vase capitals and carved with honeysuckle, said to have cost no less than seven hundred pounds.

In every way the house was admirably adapted for spectacular displays. There was a basement and a cellar, connected with the pavement by two flights of area steps. The front door opened into a long, narrow passage with a groined roof, which, after passing the reception-room door and the stairs, ended at Dr. Graham's consulting-room. Each storey had a large front and back room, divided one from the other by a small closet that occupied the space behind the stairs. By ascending to the top of the house and hanging over the mahogany rail of the iron balustrade, it was possible to induce an exciting and dangerous giddiness by looking down the staircase shaft at a statue of Venus, six floors below.

In front of Royal Terrace ran a wide private road, protected on the river side by ornamental buttresses and railings, the whole supported on the Adelphi arches, which at low water were separated from the Thames mud by a slimy, cobbled causeway. It was on this pavement that thieves, outcasts and vagrants who slept in the labyrinth of dark passages and vaults were wont to build fires of driftwood. A ruddy glare would then illuminate the grand façade of Royal Terrace, and

red and gold lights would dapple the glassy black surface of the river. If flames leapt to the level of the road, it was a signal for flunkeys to rush from every house with pails of water, which they emptied over the railings upon the riff-raff and the fires below. Wild figures, yelling and floundering in the mud, threw back missiles; sometimes a particularly lucky shot broke a window. On one occasion a sedan-porter, taking part in the *mêlée*, was said to have killed a ragamuffin with a chair-pole. If he did so, the corpse shared oblivion with other noxious objects in the dark arches.

Adaptable by nature, Emy soon grew accustomed to traversing lonely streets at midnight, to impressions of malevolent humanity, to dangerous encounters with drunken gallants. But she could not inure herself to her lodgings, to the Mudge family, nor to the Green Ground and the horrid sights seen from her bedroom window. With fortitude acquired from experience and necessity, she endured until she could alter.

Happily, her exceptional talents were appreciated and given full scope by Dr. Graham. He detailed a flautist from his orchestra to play her songs until she knew them by heart, and raised no objections to improvised trills and embellishments. He lengthened her name to Emily and advertised her as "Hygeia, Goddess of Health", on hand-bills distributed by running footmen. He had made for her suitable robes, and insisted upon a daily cold bath in the basement.

Emily Lyon became the talk of London. Each night at half-past nine she assumed a graceful pose and looked out through the lighted frame at fine gentlemen in richly embroidered clothes sprawling in queer slack attitudes, their eyes bright, glittering and greedy from thoughts whipped to ferment by Dr. Graham's aphrodisiac oratory. Emily's appearance was brief and tantalizing, but at mixed assemblies, or when women attended lectures exclusively their own, she was handed out of the gilded frame by her employer, and, leaning on his arm, passed graciously through the brilliantly lighted room.

Alive to the value of unsatisfied curiosity, Dr. Graham rendered it difficult for his clients to converse with her, a policy he could not have effected without her connivance. Suffering reaction from her love affair with Captain Willett Payne, Emily shyly recoiled from male advances; revelling in collective admiration, she shrank from its transference to the individual.

Finding themselves foiled inside the Temple of Health, young gallants and old rakes, attended by servants and carriages, waited out-

side the grand entrance in confident expectation that "Hygeia" would emerge beneath the golden legend: *Procul! O Procul este Profani!* Again Dr. Graham intervened, this time with a sedan-chair and a guard of three men armed with cudgels, who conducted Emily to her lodgings. A waiting list for two-guinea lecture tickets and a competitive scramble for admission to Thursday night assemblies accrued from these frustrative tactics.

Concurrently Emily's poverty verged upon want. Her lover's parting gift had gone on cheese-cakes for the solace of tearful wives, and on charity to poor women and hungry children. By subsisting on dainties left on the buffet in the Great Apollo Apartment, she hoped to keep out of debt until she saw an account mounting in chalk up the chimney-piece at Portugal Street. For every rush-light and jug of water Mrs. Mudge charged twice, as interest on deferred payment.

Emily's pride forbade an appeal to Dr. Graham; instead she explained her predicament to Dr. Mitford, who was thrown by the request into stammering confusion.

Mistaking the cause of embarrassment, she hastened to reassure: "'Tis only for a week, until I get my wages; then 'twill be paid at once as a debt of honour. Indeed, I'd manage to struggle along if only my shoes held together." She raised her foot for his inspection.

"Emily, how could you think I grudged the money? I'd die for you any minute, and 'twould be the greatest privilege to lend you all I've got. Unfortunately, playing at the Bedford last night, I lost to Richard Tickell and Stephen Kemble." Producing a shabby silk purse he shook from it some pieces of silver. "A poor fortune for the 'Junior Priest' of this magnificent temple, eh? Such as it is you are welcome."

"Had I known we were poor as each other I'd not have asked, but seeing I have and you so kind, I'll take half-a-crown with thankfulness."

"Two-and-sixpence will not buy shoes, Emily."

"Not new, but in Seven Dials there's a street where old clothes and frippery are sold. The pavement is covered with shoes; among so many 'twould be strange if I could not fit myself. There are hats and gowns, too, bright and fashionable things discarded by playhouse women, and even a cask of wigs, sold haphazard at sixpence a dip."

"'Tis horrible to think of one so beautiful putting on clothes worn perhaps by some diseased wretch; my blood boils because your lovely feet are nearly bare to the ground."

"At Hawarden, where I lived before I came to town, I walked

barefoot for choice, and would do here but for the pavements being so filthy they make one sick."

"You're in a wrong setting—like a lily growing on a laystall. I love you, Emily, so let's get married and set up for ourselves in some likely way. For those with a little knowledge there are fortunes and plenty. Look at Dr. Katerfelto, making a comfortable living out of electrical experiments with no more paraphernalia than a pair of black cats yielding sparks in a dark room. Throw in your lot with me, Emily, and satisfy my passion, which is quite excruciating."

Emily surveyed him with friendly compassion. Such an ordinary pale little fellow, with eager eyes and a spotty chin. . . .

George Mitford, descendant of an ancient Northumberland family, had studied for the medical profession at Edinburgh University until financial embarrassments drove him from the town. Clever, lazy, extravagant, with an unhappy love of gambling and an equally unfortunate skill at whist, he gravitated by chance and affinity into the service of Dr. James Graham, also of Edinburgh.

Gratified by his offer of marriage, Emily began her refusal gently. "Indeed I would be your wife if I could, and 'tis grateful I feel to you for asking me. But accept true love without returning it, that I could not do," she ended with the cruel candour of youth.

He flinched, but recovered gallantly. "You're young, if I wait you might come to love me."

"My poor dear, 'twill never be." Her big eyes became wide as she gazed across the Thames to fields and gardens stretching to distances vague and unknown as her own future. "Some day I'll love," she breathed.

Silently he watched her. Leaning against one of the three long windows in the Great Apollo Apartment, she polished a glass tube from the magnetical electrical throne. A wisp of muslin bound about her head confined her vivid hair; her hoop was discarded, but she still wore the blue silk gown, its glossy brightness now faded to grey uniformity. Feverish spots of colour on her cheeks added to the brilliance of her eyes, her lovely scarlet mouth, with its pouting underlip, was slightly open, showing the edges of perfect teeth. Her beauty, flawless though it was, would not have been so irresistible had it not been matched by the benign simplicity of her manner.

George Mitford felt he could gaze no more. Drawing near, he held out his purse. Emily looked into his eyes and smiled.

"Indeed you must think me the horriddest wretch if you believe I'd

take your fortune, when all I need is a shilling or so to tide me over the week."

"You must accept half," he said as he divided the coins.

"Eight shillings; 'tis a lot of money, and, I fear, more than you can afford."

"I can afford anything but to think of you in want. Emily, dear, is there no hope for me?"

She shook her head. "Not as wife or lover, but as your friend I'll be staunch and affectionate."

He turned away irritably. "That's as cruel as showing a goblet of water to a poor devil under the press at Newgate."

Emily had the afternoon as a holiday, it being an occasion when Dr. Graham lectured to his own sex. With leisure and money to spend, she would have been care-free and gay had not momentary giddiness robbed her of balance and imparted a queer rocking motion to buildings and pavements. As she passed from Long Acre to Seven Dials she encountered a dirty, blousy woman selling ginger-bread and gin. Emily walked by, reflected, and turned back.

"Would gin clear away giddiness?" she inquired.

"Gawd love yer, 'twill drive away care and trouble, ague, 'unger, and unwanted brats."

Around the rim of the hawker's basket wooden cups stood on pointed shanks thrust into the wickerwork. Exchanging twopence for a dram, Emily drank sufficient of the fiery liquor to feel a comfortable glow as it ran down her throat, but the cup was not empty when she returned it. The woman tossed off the residue.

"Gawd bless yer lovely fice," she remarked perfunctorily.

Feeling greatly revived, Emily continued her way to Monmouth Street, where, after careful search, she became the possessor of a pair of blue velvet shoes, a white travelling cape, and an umbrella of oiled silk, all for the sum of fourteen pence. Well satisfied with her prudent bargaining, she turned to her next objective: the finding of fresh lodgings. Emily knew where she wished to live, and, undeterred by disparity between her means and her ambitions, had accepted an invitation to take tea with her prospective landlady.

Mrs. Montizambia occupied No. 4, Tavistock Row, a double-fronted, five-storeyed residence with a pair of rounded shop fronts on either side of the door. The shop was let to a fashionable milliner, who had to submit to her show-room being used as a right-of-way. Mrs. Montizambia's sitting-room was over the shop, her bedchamber

behind it; this left her with several surplus rooms, which she let at high rentals to selected members of the theatrical profession. The skill of her cook and the comfort of her apartments allowed her to pick and choose; that she took lodgers from choice and not from necessity was an additional reason for popularity and exclusiveness.

Armed with a large basket, it was Mrs. Montizambia's practice to poke around the market stalls first thing in the morning, and it was on one of these occasions that she and Emily became acquainted. Mrs. Montizambia flattered herself on being as sound a judge of a beauty as she was of a cauliflower, and, believing her opinions to be of importance, was in the habit of pronouncing them in a rich baritone. On this occasion she expressed herself with customary force, although her audience consisted only of old women retailing milk, porridge and barley-broth on the steps of Covent Garden sun-dial.

"During twenty years as wardrobe mistress at Drury Lane many of the most beautiful, aye, indeed I may boast *all* the most beautiful and attractive women of the epoch, came into my orbit. With that experience behind me, I say without malice or fear of contradiction that never have I beheld such a masterpiece of grace and loveliness as yonder maiden imbibing broth from a homely mug."

The old woman addressed regarded Emily with lack-lustre eyes. "A bouncing wench," she wheezily acknowledged.

"What would not Sir Joshua give to depict with his pencil those perfect lineaments?"

"Gawd, 'ow should I know?" Huddling herself more closely in her shawl, the old woman spat expressively. As an unlikely purchaser of cold porridge, Mrs. Montizambia paid for no humouring. . . .

Carried on the tide of her own enthusiasm, and accompanied by the screeches of a white cockatoo strutting on her shoulder, Mrs. Montizambia bore down on Emily and tapped her with a fan.

"D'you know, my dear, you are the most beautiful creature I ever beheld?"

Emily was startled, but not taken aback, and she remembered her manners. Dropping a pretty curtsy she said: "Thank you, Ma'am."

"Nicely brought up, I see, and well trained. None of the ballet women could execute a neater obeisance. Who taught you such good behaviour?"

"My grandmother, Ma'am. As a maid she was in service at Nanteribba, Montgomery, with the tenth Viscount; 'twas through Lady Hereford she learnt many pretty ways."

"Nothing like a good grounding, my dear, nothing like a good grounding."

After this encounter they met frequently in Covent Garden. It became Emily's custom to carry the basket while Mrs. Montizambia made purchases. During these excursions she heard about Mr. Montizambia, a joint proprietor of the 'Old Hummums' and the 'New Hummums,' and the clever manner in which his widow disposed of the hotel partnerships to invest in the Funds. She also learnt that when Mr. Charles Macklin was not playing in Dublin, he, with his wife and daughter, occupied the two pair of stairs apartments in Tavistock Row.

"Which leaves me, my dear, with a charming chamber, sweetly furnished, on the top floor. Having a heart, and being subject to spasms, I rarely venture so high, but when I did see the room I thought it very delightful, very delightful indeed. I suppose you are not acquainted with a nice girl who would like it for a nominal rent? She must have appearance. I can't abide ugly women, I've made it a rule never to look at one, and I'm not going to alter my habits."

At this point the cockatoo gave an ear-splitting screech. She tapped the bird with her fan. "Be quiet, Roscius; there are no plain females here."

Mrs. Montizambia was thick-set and walked with a waddle. She had a square, masculine face with sharp, beady black eyes under shaggy brows. Her Jewish nose was large; on her upper lip grew a luxuriant moustache. Having enjoyed great felicity with Mr. Montizambia, and being of a romantic disposition, she had vowed to remain faithful to the fashions he had known and admired. At his death in 1777, heads were worn three feet high, with feathers: *en rayons de soleil*, or with fruit, turnips and potatoes: *le jardin Anglais*. Such erections were built to stand for a month, but Mrs. Montizambia summoned the hair-dresser at the last extremity. When she and Emily became acquainted, the coiffure was leaning like the tower of Pisa; it was, as Mrs. Montizambia expressed it, "just ripe for opening up." That Emily might be the first to see and congratulate on a restoration was the ostensible reason for the tea-party.

Emily was shown into the parlour, hung with Indian paper, and adorned with little images of mandarins and pagodas, Chelsea china figures, filigree ornaments in gilt vermeil, and theatrical cartoons made from silk, velvet and tinsel. Along the chimney-piece ran Liliputian stage-coaches, chariots, chaises and *vis-à-vis*, drawn by dapple

greys and bays, with coachmen, postilions and gentlemen, all made of blown glass. Associated with these *objets d'art* were mementos of the playhouse: a drawing of Miss Barsanti as Lydia Languish; a portrait of Robert Baddeley wearing the scarlet livery granted by the King to actors; David Garrick caricatured walking on a cask rolling into Drury Lane to the query: "Wine-merchant or Player?" There were property crowns, swords and sceptres; ribbons worn by Kitty Clive, and James Quin's snuff-box. Eva Maria Violette had inscribed her ballet shoe; Queen Charlotte was represented by a withered bouquet left in the royal box. The room was crowded with chairs, tables, screens and, in the window, a stand whereon Roscius pranced and scattered parrot seed.

Presently Mrs. Montizambia appeared, glorified by a mountainous white coiffure ornamented with a pair of feathered robins and a chenille nest of real eggs.

"Glad you've come, my dear; glad you've come. Not looking so well as you might—too high a colour, and queer about the eyes. Smell of spirits, too. Not taking to drink, I hope? You're young for that, though on Sunday mornings I often see girls of twelve carried from the taverns and laid beside their elders on the pavements."

"A while ago I felt so strange and giddy I bought gin from a woman who said 'twould cure me. Quite right she proved, and the draught was worth the tuppence it cost."

"Poison, my dear, poison; 'tis clear you need guidance in this great metropolis. Where's your mother?"

"In service at Warwick Castle. My Lady has a young baby, so the family did not come to town for the season. Next year they'll open their house in St. James's Square, unless My Lady is brought to bed again. If she is, God knows when I'll see my mother."

"You'd better rent my top room, my dear. I shan't let you have it for nothing, because too much help is injurious to the young. How much can you pay?"

"But little; all I have for the month is two-pound ten, and that has to cover everything."

Mrs. Montizambia regarded her thoughtfully. "For thirty shillings a month I'll give you board, lodging, light, and pay the washer-woman. 'Twill leave you five shillings a week for clothes and savings—more than I had when a girl of fifteen."

"'Twould be riches," Emily agreed.

She was allowed to inspect her new quarters: a large, airy attic with

iron bars across the windows. In one corner was a small four-post bed hung with dimity, in another a mahogany wash-hand-stand fitted with blue and white delft. A chair, a table and a cupboard completed the furniture; decoration, on a lavish scale, comprised knick-knacks and pictures impossible to accommodate elsewhere.

Emily returned to the parlour to find Mrs. Montizambia carefully measuring the best Bohea into a china tea-pot, while the cook stood ready with the kettle, snatched from the kitchen fire as the water reached boiling point.

"The art of preparing tay lies in having everything piping hot, but never allow the kettle to over-boil, or the delicate aroma of the herb will be lost. How d'you like the room?—refined and elegant, to my thinking."

"'Tis beautiful."

Mrs. Montizambia looked gratified. "Then we'll consider the matter settled, my dear, and I'll expect you to-morrow sen'night."

Cups and saucers, tea-pot, milk-jug and sugar-basin stood upon a large china tray. All were of Wedgwood in a costly and curious design.

"Admiring the equipage, my dear? A gift from Mr. David Garrick when he retired from the profession and sold Old Drury to Messrs. Sheridan, Linley and Ford. 'Twas my retirement too, because Mrs. Linley was made wardrobe mistress, and a niggardly one she's proved."

"I wish I'd seen Mr. Garrick."

Mrs. Montizambia wiped a tear from each eye. "His death robbed the theatre of its greatest figure. Alexander Pope said: 'He never had his equal as an actor, and he will never have a rival.' I went to Drury Lane in 1747, and for twenty-nine years worked under Garrick without a disagreement. If I wanted forty yards of lustring for the leading lady's dress, I had only to order it. No explanations, no questions; my judgment was relied upon. Mr. Garrick and I understood each other. He was very devoted to me, my dear, very devoted to me."

Mrs. Montizambia emptied her cup and turned it upside down in the saucer, indicating that tea-drinking was over.

"Now then, my dear, I'll show you my treasures; 'tis not often you'll see such interesting things."

Regaled on old scandal and gossip, Emily was happy in Tavistock Row until her liberty was over. She left the house as stars began to spangle a sky still tinged with the glow of sunset. She felt light-

headed and dizzy; once or twice she had to stop and lean against a wall. Crossing the Strand she was nearly run over by the Bristol coach, an adventure that sent her scudding fearfully down the first alley leading to the Thames.

Music, lights and excitement at the Temple of Health diverted her thoughts and enabled her to ignore a throbbing head and queer fallacies of vision. Waiting to step into the gilded frame, she could see, through a gap in the curtains, rows of white disks instead of faces, and fountains of fire in place of the bland illumination afforded by a pair of chandeliers. Sound fluctuated in a manner similarly distorted. At one moment Dr. Graham's voice boomed in her ears, at the next it floated away like a reed played on by the wind.

With a great effort she brought her faculties into focus; the doctor's voice steadied to melodious tempo: "For, gentlemen, there is not, in my opinion, anything more calculated to subvert everything desirable in the married state than that odious, most indecent and most hurtful custom of man and wife continually *pigging* together in one and the same bed . . ." Again Emily's senses reeled and returned to her with a rush ". . . to sleep, snore, steam, and do everything else that's indelicate together three hundred and sixty-five times—every year. . . ." The pendulum of sight and sound swinging afar cast Emily into a padded, dark abyss.

She came back from tranquil eternity to Dr. Mitford's ministrations. Why come back from a pleasantly negative state? . . . Impersonally she heeded droning conversations, scraping fiddles and chinking glasses issuing from the Great Apollo Apartment. *Eau de Luce* was dabbed on her forehead, burnt feathers applied to her nose; stubbornly she refused to re-enter a difficult world. . . .

Eventually a dose of "electrical æther" drastically recalled her to life. "You're fortunate to be in my charge," Dr. Graham complacently remarked; "but for this infallible febrifuge you would share the fate ignorance prepares for thousands."

"I feel ill enough to be dying," Emily moaned.

"Due to my skill, you will recover."

Jogging in a hackney chair to Portugal Street, Emily disbelieved Dr. Graham's assertion. What affliction was this but the prelude to an early grave? . . .

Passing through Covent Garden, fears were augmented by an ill-omened meeting with a funeral procession going from St. Paul's Church to the Green Ground. A beadle and two men bearing white

plumes preceded four black-and-white horses drawing a hearse crowned with bunches of black-and-white feathers. On either side walked six girls in white dresses and caps, then, two by two, came mourners wearing long black cloaks, white weepers, and scarves. Each carried a bunch of rosemary and a lighted torch.

It was the funeral of a maid, and Emily was obliged to follow in its wake along a narrow street that responded with lonely echoes to clattering hoofs and rumbling wheels. The flickering orange glare flowed in a wavering tide up overhanging house-fronts and into the darkness ahead. Splintered shadows slipped from gables and projecting storeys, grotesque silhouettes of plumes, horses, muffled figures and queer head-dresses streaked across windows, doors and pent-houses.

Feeling alternately hot and cold, Emily watched with gloomy foreboding the cavalcade moving slowly along the centre of the street. Her view was restricted to those mourners whose disabilities relegated them to the rear. A man on crutches swung forward his single leg beside a companion rocking sideways on a pair shaped like sickles; a dwarf, broad as he was long, kept pace with a tall, gaunt man lurching on a club foot. The torches they carried followed their tortuous motions, describing arcs of flame, which, as they dipped to earth, scattered golden drops.

On turning into Portugal Street, the chairmen were able to pass the procession, which had stopped outside the Green Ground. Tombstones, black against radiance from the rising moon, looked down over the high wall at the mourners upholding their torches to light the white coffin up the steps. Shuddering, Emily crossed herself, and immediately was amazed by the gesture. Emy Lyon, a good Protestant, making the sign of a Papist! . . .

Outside Lincoln's Inn Theatre, attendants extinguished oil lamps, an open door disclosed a glimmering candle and a group of men and women with grease-paint on their faces.

Emily was carried down the lane to her lodgings. From Carey Street came a watchman's cry: "Eleven of the clock, and all's well!"

Twisting the latch, she admitted herself to the Mudges' kitchen; stale, sour-smelling air enfolded her. She staggered and caught at the table, while the room and its occupants whirled like a merry-go-round.

"They've got 'er, they've got 'er!" Mr. Mudge wheezed triumphantly. "I knew them in the graveses would tolerate 'er no better than wot I did. A man must go down among 'em to get t'rot, but a

skit can be poisoned by drinking water wot's seeped through their coffins. Grr! You and yer beauty! Soon yer'll look t'same as me."

Mrs. Mudge, heating ale over the fire, turned and gave Emily a searching glance. "Aye, churchyard fever's on yer, sure enough. Weaklings get off light, but yer'll 'ave it bad, being strong and bouncing." Unwilling admiration showed in her face. "Yer'd make a lovely corpse," she was forced to acknowledge.



CHAPTER EIGHT

BLISTERINGS, fevered visions and the bitter taste of Peruvian bark comprised Emily's memories of the next five weeks. She lay in the low-ceiled bedroom of a small house at St. Giles, whither she had been conveyed by order of Dr. Graham. Few could be found to nurse malignant fevers, a woman's willingness to ministrate, rather than her ability to do so, determined the fate of the stricken. Dame Puddiphat occupied one of six alms-houses standing behind a dwarf brick wall in the centre of the High Street. Condemned as unsafe in the reign of George II, the picturesque terrace leaned patiently on wooden shores that had become nearly as rotten as the walls they supported. In decrepitude Dame Puddiphat matched her home; twisted by rheumatism and deficient in sight and hearing, her ministrations were blundering as her intentions were exemplary. But for her daughter, Charity, a kitchen servant at the 'Bowl Inn', Emily would have fared badly. In brief truanacies from her legitimate occupation, Charity tended the patient so skilfully that death was frustrated, a victory Dr. Graham ascribed to his own excellence and the unique properties of electrical æther.

Emily's long battle left her weak and despondent. When able to quit her bed she tottered to a splinter of looking-glass propped on the window-ledge. She hardly recognized herself. Her face had lost its childish roundness, her eyes their candid, limpid stare; she looked at a pale, heart-shaped countenance that framed large, fathomless eyes. Gone were the long, tawny tresses that had been her pride, only jagged tufts remained, too short to brush back from the peak upon her forehead.

Forlorn she might feel, but not deserted. Mary Mudge was a faithful visitor; repeated exposure to *Typhus gravior* in infancy having rendered her impervious to infection, an immunity she promised to Emily.

"You could even go safe into the Rector's Vault under St. Clement's Church, which no man durst enter till three days after opening."

Emily shuddered, recalling how nearly she had escaped permanent lodgment in a tomb. "You talk as if churchyard fever gave benefit. Sure, it's nearly ruined my prospects. How I'll do for a living without my looks, God only knows."

"You're well favoured enough even though your hair's shorn. Wouldn't surprise me if you could get work at a playhouse. T'other day in the Strand I met Jane Farmer carrying tinsel clothes to Mr. Linley's house in Norfolk Street. She said she was engaged to cook for the family, but more often she took Mrs. Linley's place as wardrobe woman at Old Drury. When the playhouse opens in September, Jane's promised a part in a play called *Hamlet*."

"She's got her hair."

"Only rat's tails!"

Apart from Mary's visits, Emily depended for amusement upon watching the traffic in the High Street. Twice a day the horseman from the 'Half Moon' clattered past crying: "Fresh Holloway cheese-cakes!" Stage-coaches and slow waggons rumbled to and from the City; creaking farm-carts brought produce from Hornsey and Haringay; vagrants, itinerant traders and postboys provided a varied and perpetual procession. Sometimes a family would go by, trundling household goods on a barrow; cows were driven from city stables to pastures at Tottenham Court. Bear-wards and their beasts, tumblers, "jingling Johnnies", and troops of performing dogs limped, walked and ran to fairs in northern villages.

At the end of Emily's quarantine a hanging took place at Tyburn. Charity Puddiphat was pleasurably excited, as it was the custom for malefactors on their way to the gallows to stop at the 'Bowl Tavern' for a parting draught. This had allowed her to see at close quarters such notable felons as Dr. Dodd, the forger, and Mr. Hackman, murderer of Miss Ray.

Apprehensive lest Emily should oversleep, and so miss the procession, Charity volunteered to knock with a broomstick on the bedroom window at seven o'clock—an unnecessary warning, because Emily was awakened at five by raucous voices chanting: "Here's all the right and true last dying speech and confession, birth, parentage and education, life, character and behaviour of the unfortunate malefactors to be executed this morning at Tyburn." Vendors passed, to be succeeded by others bawling in the same tone. Some blew horns to

insure greater attention, all repeated the same words; there was no cessation, no interval.

Emily rose, dressed, and ate her breakfast of cold porridge, set stiff and shiny in a pudding-basin. During her meal a large concourse gathered in the High Street. Stalls of ginger-bread, nuts and apples were set against the low wall. A strong man trespassed within the inclosure, and, naked save for spangled trunks, exhibited swelling muscles to crowds gaping in the street. Ragged old women carried bottles of *Geneva* in open baskets, a wild, handsome girl in a soldier's coat beat a drum to advertise a row of brimming cups. Windows filled with spectators; the ostler at the 'Bowl' sat astraddle the bracket carrying the tavern sign. Down in the gutter a ragged trollop, suckling an infant, sang drearily as she walked along:

*"But when we come to Tyburn
For going upon the budge,
There stands Jack Catch, that son of a whore,
That owes us all a grudge,
And when that he hath noosed us,
And our friends tips him no cole,
Oh, then he throws us in the cart
And tumbles us into the hole."*

St. Giles's Church clock rang the half-hour after eight as a distant murmur announced the approach of the cavalcade. Huzzahs, boos and hisses could be distinguished in the tumult that swept ahead of the procession.

First came soldiers and constables on horseback, then the sheriff, stiff and bolt upright in his carriage. Behind him jolted clumsy two-wheeled carts drawn by horses sufficiently powerful to have mastered Holborn Hill. Each cart was inclosed by slanting pales, absent at the back to facilitate the work of the hangman. Three-legged stools provided seats for passengers; those desiring support could lean against their own coffins; a comfort disdained by the handsome ruffianly highwayman whose professional status entitled him to precedence in the ride to Tyburn.

He was finely dressed in cut velvet and satin, his hair was powdered and he wore a patch beside his cynical mouth. A white cap with black ribbons perched jauntily on his head; a large nosegay adorned his embroidered waistcoat. Standing with such nonchalance as a jolting

platform and fettered elbows permitted, he tossed and caught an orange, or leant over the pales to shake hands with admiring lads who ran with the procession.

The occupant of the second cart drew from Emily a startled exclamation. John Glover lay sprawling at ease with his woolly black head resting on his coffin. Although decked out with the customary cap and nosegay, he still wore the lackey's livery that he had made conspicuous during the riots. As he rumbled along on his last journey he sucked his orange, spat out the pips, and grinned with flashing teeth at his flaunting doxies, tripping on either side, their hoops swinging and ducking like petals of bright peonies tossed by the wind.

Francis Mockford, who followed, presented a different spectacle. He sat with drooping head and slack figure, his red hands pinched between bony knees, with feet splayed as if seeking balance for his painfully lurching body; his pose proclaimed weariness, bewilderment, desolation. The Ordinary sat alongside, reading aloud from the book of Jeremiah, words that floated on the soft breeze to Emily: "And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me: Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not. . . ."

The cart conveying the highwayman stopped outside the 'Bowl Inn,' whereupon every vehicle came to a standstill. Charity Puddiphat walked down the line bearing tankards of ale on a big wooden tray. The highwayman bowed and drank to the ladies; John Glover emptied his mug and threw it in the gutter; Francis Mockford shook his head and twisted the rope round his neck so that it hung in a loop across his chest.

Up in her poor room Emily wept until she could see no more of the march to Tyburn. Horses snorted and shook their heavy harness, whips cracked and wheels rumbled. Above the din rose a shrill, cracked voice: "Here's the right and true copy of the letter which the negro servant, John Glover, wrote to his white sweetheart the night before his execution."

When Emily again looked out it was upon an emptying thoroughfare. Vendors, impeded by trestle-tables and sacks of provisions, staggered after the cloud of dust that obscured the procession. Plumstones, rotten apples, straw and husks from cob nuts lay on the pavement amid refuse of a more noxious kind. Now and again a withered leaf fluttered from the old elm tree growing within the garden wall.

Thrusting her head and shoulders through the narrow casement, Emily glanced down the curving street to the church. A sedan-chair being carried at a brisk pace engaged her attention. The lid was up to make room for a towering coiffure and a tiny chip hat. Instead of proceeding along the High Street towards Tottenham Court Road, the porters turned into the narrow garden of the alms-houses and deposited the chair beneath Emily's window. Pleasurably surprised, she looked down upon Mrs. Montizambia and upon Roscius shrieking as he raised himself up and down on his claws. A basket of apples and cakes had to be removed before the visitor could step out.

In her excitement Emily nearly fell from the window. "Oh, thank you, Ma'am, for coming. Indeed I thought myself deserted by everyone. Oh, what a happy girl I am to find I have a friend! If only I could express myself! If I had words to thank you! No longer will I weep and feel forlorn, for I have a guide and counsellor in Mrs. Montizambia!"

Emily's enthusiastic outburst fell agreeably upon ears accustomed to rhetoric of the theatre. "Very nicely spoken, my dear, very nicely indeed. So long as you are actuated by becoming sentiments you may count upon my assistance. Indeed, you were rarely out of my thoughts these many weeks, and had it not been for danger of infection I should have been here before. But typhus is not to be trifled with, my dear!"

"I thought myself dying many a time."

"Surprised you did not, child! Nothing could be more injurious than water from a graveyard well. I've always said so—an opinion corroborated by Dr. Graham. A splendid figure of a man that, my dear—over-developed in the belly, perhaps, but Garrick himself couldn't boast finer shoulders or more shapely legs."

"He's kind and gentle in sickness, too, though he seems stern and proud at the Temple of Health."

"Has to be, my dear, or he'd never restrain his assemblies of aristocratic harlots."

By Mrs. Montizambia's orders one of the porters climbed on the chair seat to hand up to Emily a gift of cakes and fruit. "Though 'tis beef and strong cordials that are needed to restore your vigour. You come to me, my dear, and you shall have the special dish of chopped bullock's liver always available at the 'Hummums' for prize-fighters and pugnacious gentlemen."

Emily clapped her hands in delight. "Oh, Ma'am, 'twould be a

dream come true to go to your lovely house. Sure, you'll never regret your goodness to a poor lonely girl."

"I'm assured of that, my dear. Took a fancy to you the first time I saw you. 'If I'd had a daughter,' I said to myself, 'she'd have been just such a beauty.' And I never make a mistake, my dear, I never make a mistake. Be ready to leave this afternoon, and I'll engage these men to fetch you in the chair. Most respectable, both of them, known them for years, or I wouldn't entrust you to them."

Emily bade her friend adieu with feelings of gratitude and joy, sentiments modified after six weeks' sojourn in Tavistock Row. Mrs. Montizambia combined the solicitude of a mother with the strictness of a duenna—a comportment gratifying during convalescence, but intolerable when health was restored. Emily, whose conduct had ever been governed by chance and wilfulness, found herself bridled by routine that forced her along a path remote from her choice.

Before breakfast, carrying a basket to be filled after much haggling, she accompanied her patroness on a tour of the market stalls in Covent Garden. Later, while Mrs. Montizambia washed up on a large tray Mr. Garrick's gift of Wedgwood cups and saucers, Emily cleaned the parrot's perch, a privilege belligerently contested by Roscius. She was allowed half an hour to dust her bedroom and arrange her dress for the day, a task complicated by a luxurious wig, the property of Kitty Clive, lent until Emily's hair grew. This gigantic structure, as tall as a busby and hot as a muff, had a trick of tilting to one side unless attached by a strip of gum to the forehead.

When her costume was settled to accord with the propriety of Tavistock Row, she must return to the drawing-room for the remainder of the morning. But if, on descending the stairs she could hear Mrs. Montizambia urging Roscius to learn "Rule, Britannia!" she knew she had time in hand, and settled herself on the steps outside Mr. Charles Macklin's rooms to listen to the elocution lesson proceeding within. It was the *ton* to take lessons from the veteran actor, and ladies whose fashionable aspirations exceeded their talents meekly submitted to outspoken comments shouted by the irascible old man. Sometimes Emily was joined by Mrs. Macklin, smelling strongly of the gin with which she rubbed her husband's body before he got up.

"'Tis the spirit entering through the skin that keeps him young and vigorous," she was wont to explain; "what other man of eighty-three could shout so loud or write a play accepted for the Theatre Royal?"

"Indeed he storms as fiercely as a sea officer," Emily sympathetically rejoined. "and 'tis agreed they are the most violent of men."

Mrs. Macklin regarded her curiously. "You speak as though you'd known one intimately."

Emily blushed and rose quickly from the step. "'Tis only what I've heard. Six months ago I was at Hawarden, and you, who are a Chester woman, know what chance there is of meeting sea officers in so countrified a place."

The conversation, trifling though it was, served to disturb Emily's tranquillity. She found her thoughts constantly recurring to Captain Payne and the lively week she had spent in his company. In contrast the overcrowded, stuffy room appeared duller than ever, and the occupations she was expected to pursue additionally irksome and unnecessary. Under Mrs. Montizambia's tutelage she constructed scenes from rolled paper, wove trinkets from horsehair and beads, and fashioned flowers from the breast-feathers of small birds—elegant accomplishments that in no way commended themselves to Emily's active personality.

She surveyed her work derisively. "Never did I expect to find myself making all this rubbish. It does me no good and somebody else much harm, for a poor girl will have to dust it, and 'tis no wish of mine so to punish another."

"Hoity-toity! To hear you talk one would suppose you an heiress, instead of a common serving-wench living on charity. Very foolish I was to befriend you, very foolish indeed!"

Glowing wrathfully, Mrs. Montizambia swept across the room to Roscius and found expression for her anger in "Rule, Britannia!" sung in a series of "chirps", which she always hoped the bird would emulate.

Roscius quizzically swivelled his eyes, raised his sulphur-coloured crest, and with his back turned upon instruction, strutted to the end of his perch, where he gave a triumphant shriek.

Meanwhile Emily wandered to the window and looked down upon Tavistock Row. It was a dreary October morning, a grey sky stretched above chimney-pots, wisps of smoke rose sluggishly into vapid air, soot clung to house-fronts, dust lay thickly on pavements. Here and there lay a withered leaf, left by a bygone wind.

Impatiently Emily drummed her fingers on the window-pane. "'Tis not my ambition to live like the gentry or to learn their idle ways. Work and action is wine to me; indeed, I shall bust if I have

to sit much longer pricking and poking at fiddling things. My God! I'd rather be a powder-monkey than the Princess Royal, for all her soft life."

"Girl, your black ingratitude appals me! Is it for this I have sacrificed time and comfort? Is it for this I have lavished care and affection? If poor Montizambia knew the treatment meted to his relict, he would turn in his grave."

Nearly weeping, Emily swung round to face her patroness. "Indeed I'm not unmindful of your kindness, nor thankless. 'Tis freedom to be myself that I ask. Why don't you let me out into the streets to roam as I please? Why may I not go back to sing and stand in attitudes at Dr. Graham's lectures?"

"An improper request, miss—very improper indeed. The Temple of Health is a sink of iniquity. While you were ill I had the curiosity to attend a lecture; lewd and dissolute I discovered it to be after I had shaken off the doctor's fascination. Only a miracle saved your innocence and virtue. 'Tis a dangerous place for the young, my dear, a dangerous place for the young."

"If I mayn't do that, may I seek work at a playhouse? Jane Farmer would help me, I'm sure, but when she asked me to see her acting in *Hamlet*, you wouldn't let me go."

"Accept invitations from Mrs. Linley's dependant? Mrs. Linley, who supplanted me after twenty-nine years as wardrobe woman? That's expecting a little too much, my girl, a little too much indeed!"

"Then what can I do? I mayn't even walk in Lincoln's Inn Fields because ladies of quality only venture abroad when accompanied by a gentleman or a footman. And I lack both, God help me!"

"I don't wish to be harsh, my dear, I don't wish to be harsh. If I could walk myself, I'd accompany you gladly, but I've got a heart, child, I've got a heart."

"Mary Mudge could come with me sometimes."

"A dirty slut, my dear, a dirty slut. Unsuitable in every way. But as you're bent on it, I'll find you a duenna—yes, I'll certainly secure a suitable duenna."

She was discovered in the person of Maria Macklin, and her services secured by a small fee. The daughter of Charles Macklin by his first wife, Maria had commenced a stage career at an early age. Unhappily her professional zeal had proved her undoing. Specializing in parts which called for the wearing of tights, she enhanced the shapeliness of her legs by bandaging them, a practice that had led to

an operation, lameness and retirement from the boards. When she appeared on Emily's horizon she was forty-six, sallow and pinched, with pale blue eyes fixed upon heaven.

It was an effort to walk as far as Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Maria was thankful to sink upon one of the felled trees. Compassion, coupled with policy, prompted Emily to urge prolongation of such halts. By wandering away from Maria she made interesting acquaintances with idlers playing at "The Wheel of Fortune", with the crippled beggars who haunted the fields, and among girls of the town on watch for likely clients.

Emily's preference was for country scenes, but Maria's interest centred in the courts and streets round Covent Garden. As days shortened and leaves fell, when autumn's bland sunshine vanished in November fogs, Maria's wishes were gratified. Once more she became a familiar figure in obscure coffee-houses, where in back rooms play-house women congregated to furbish old dresses with the aid of flat-irons and crimping-tongs on hire at a penny an hour. Emily took kindly to the company of actresses, and entertained them with songs and attitudes she had performed at the Temple of Health; in exchange she was taught to walk on her toes and to execute a pirouette in the air. She became Maria's companion to pits of theatres and accompanied her to divine service in St. Paul's Church. By nature Maria was religious, a tendency advanced by shattered health and broken hopes, but despite her need and a wish to think otherwise, her conception of Deity had been as of something cold and vast floating amid remote blue skies. To this Being, who could not be expected to care much for Maria Macklin and her throbbing varicose veins, she had painstakingly projected loving thoughts. Meeting the Reverend James Tattersall had given her new ideas; no longer was it difficult to picture an affectionate Father in heaven compassionate for his children, no longer was it pain to hobble where once she had danced. . . . Sitting in the dark, oblong building, so like a concert-hall and so little like a church, Maria listened to good words dropping like balm from the Rector's tongue. She looked up at his jovial, handsome face. She thought of God. . . .

Emily, a pagan despite her regular attendance at Hawarden Church, was conscious only of effluvia rising from crowded vaults, and her thoughts, instead of concerning themselves with higher matters, drifted to Roscius through the medium of "Rule, Britannia!" newly scored on Dr. Arne's memorial tablet in the wall above her head.

It was after attending a mid-week service on a raw November afternoon, that she suddenly encountered Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh hastening to the Bedford 'Coffee-House'. For a moment they stared at each other without salutation. Sir Harry was the first to recover his wits: "*Hé surprise!* The beautiful Emy! I scarcely expected to see you here." His manner was haughty, his dissipated face wore an expression of disdain.

"If 'tis London you mean, I've never left it since you and Captain Payne befriended me in the summer. Often I've hoped to meet you to thank you for your kindness."

"You had the means. *You* broke your bargain to join me after our gallant friend quitted the town." Sir Harry appeared somewhat mollified, but his prominent, pale-lashed eyes still suspiciously stared.

"Indeed I made no bargain," Emily indignantly retorted; "and as you left London first, I could not have joined you had I wished it!"

Her anger caused an alteration in his manner; he grew red and stammered: "I un-understood you er—er agreed."

"Then 'twas wrong you werel" Emily's glance lighted on a farm waggon unloading inside the market rails. "Mistook me for a sack of potatoes to be sold to the highest bidder, I'm thinking!" she mused in pensive tones.

"I see I made a *faux pas*, and I'm sorry for it. I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

"'Tis the only amends you can make now. Maybe your mistake will serve as a lesson not to take things for granted. God knows I don't grudge errors if they are the means of teaching wisdom." Emily's lovely face was noble and magnanimous.

Goggling with puzzled admiration, Sir Harry eagerly responded: "Thank ye! Thank ye!"

Emily made a movement to rejoin Maria, who stood a little apart. Since quitting the stage Maria had become indifferent to dress, and often presented a curious appearance. To-day, because of inclement weather, she wore an antiquated green plaid travelling coat of her father's, a shabby tricorne with flaps drawn down and pinned under her chin, pattens, and she carried an umbrella of oiled silk in addition to a heavy stick used for walking. Despite abundant clothing, she shivered, and her thin face looked pinched and blue between the flaps of her hat.

Sir Harry stared amazedly on his attention being directed to Maria. Following his glance, Emily volunteered an explanation: "My

duenna. 'Tis thought unfitting for me to walk alone in the town."

The baronet opened his mouth to speak, thought better of it, and pressed his lips together, a performance he repeated so often that Emily was reminded of a goldfish gaping in a glass bowl. At last he said: "I'm *enchanté* you are with so careful a protector, though I must regret the privilege has gone to another. Would it be indiscreet to ask the name of your *amoureux*?"

Emily looked blank. "You mean the kind friend who gives me board and lodging? 'Tis Mrs. Montizambia, and sorely vexed she would be to see me talking with a stranger."

"Cruel Emy! Not a stranger, but your faithful friend and *serviteur*!" Sir Harry bowed gallantly, with his hand on his heart. "Your words have restored my life and renewed hope! Tell me we meet again—à *bientôt*."

She studied him without enthusiasm. Pointed features and sandy colouring gave him a foxy look. His eyelids were inflamed and had pouches beneath—marks of dissipation that made him appear viciously precocious rather than experienced.

"At noon we generally walk up and down the piazza. If it rains the arcades keep us dry, and there's always something to watch in the square, even if 'tis only Dr. Johnson twitching his mouth and laying his hands on the street posts as he passes them."

"Until to-morrow I shall be all impatience! Were it possible to remove your *chaperon* out of ear-shot, the rendezvous would be even more *séduisant*."

Emily gave him a roguish glance and dropped a mocking curtsy. "Must I tell you again that I make no bargains?"

"*Je vous demande pardon*. I am at your mercy—be kind!"

Skipping away while he was yet bowing, she rejoined Maria, who looked petrified with cold. But although Maria's teeth chattered and her knees shook, she evinced no vexation. "'Tis easy to see you've struck the gentleman's fancy. He's got the glassy stare they all wear when in love."

Emily was alarmed for Maria, who looked as though she ought to be in bed with a hot brick against her feet, but her fears proved unfounded, for on the following morning it was she, and not Maria, who showed symptoms of a chill.

Sympathetic and resourceful, Mrs. Montizambia knelt before the parlour fire to stir a cordial compounded from *aqua vitæ*, liquorice, cloves, raisins, mace and ginger.

"Not that it can work a miracle, my dear, but as a palliative against imprudent exposure, 'tis unrivalled."

"The cure is walking in fresh air, that way I got rid of many colds at home."

"Because you had no choice, Emily, because you had no choice."

"I could have stayed stuffily indoors had I wished. My granny treated me tenderly, and would have wrapped me in her feather bed if 'twas the right treatment."

"Then she must be an ignorant woman, very ignorant indeed."

"She is not, but wise and kind, even though she can't write her name and must needs ask my Uncle Kidd to read her Bible to her. Learning teaches foolishness more often than sense, and I'd rather her way of treating a running nose than this, which is stifling me."

"Emily Lyon, you are an ungrateful, impertinent girl; had I guessed your true character I would not have taken you to my bosom. But 'what's done cannot be undone', and when Sophia Montizambia undertakes a duty she carries it through. I mean to train you into an elegant, accomplished, agreeable female, refractory and unpromising as you are. In future there'll be no more trapesing the streets. You'll stay here with me, my girl, learning crafts becoming to our sex."

Half-formulated schemes took shape in Emily's mind. An association that had appeared disagreeable on awakening seemed alluring when contrasted with the programme disclosed. Beggars couldn't be choosers. . . . 'Twas a pity Sir Harry's wiles were in keeping with the creature he resembled. . . .

Like a Jack-in-the-Box, Mrs. Montizambia uprose in her hoop, and, carrying the skillet to a table, poured the steaming cordial into a tall glass beaker. Emily sulkily kept her eyes on the fire until an explosive sob made her turn.

"Emily, how can you be so cruel and unfeeling after all I've tried to do? Had you been my own child I couldn't have treated you better—no, I couldn't have treated you better!" Mrs. Montizambia's face was puckered and distorted by grief.

Struggling from a padded quilt, Emily rushed to her patroness and embraced her broad, heaving shoulders. "God knows I don't intend to be ungrateful. Indeed, I'm truly thankful for kindness. But a strong girl like me, used to hard work and freedom, can't take easily to ladies' ways."

"Very right you are, my dear, very right you are. I've been too impatient." Mrs. Montizambia violently blew her nose and rubbed her

moustache with her handkerchief. When she spoke again it was in a contemplative voice: "Should have taken a lesson from Roscius. For seven years I've rehearsed 'Rule, Britannia!' for that bird without his contributing a note. But I'll make him sing it—yes, I'll make him sing it!"

Because Emily was truly tender-hearted, she spent the morning trying to please her benefactress, an amiable endeavour greatly assisted by the genial properties of the cordial of which they had both partaken. Emily rolled gilded paper into cylinders and glued them together to form a filigree façade of Drury Lane Theatre, while Mrs. Montizambia read aloud dramas produced at the famous playhouse and retold the pitiful story of the quarrel over a stock wig which resulted in Mr. Macklin killing Mr. Hannam with a pointed stick. Emily had heard the tale many times, and, from her own sufferings, could readily believe a wig instrumental in causing calamitous acts.

"As you are visiting Mrs. Clive the day after to-morrow, maybe you'll take back the wig she so kindly lent?" Emily's lovely eyes looked up in innocent inquiry. "My own hair has grown so luxuriant I no longer need a false covering."

"Tut, child, tut! So you call a mop of apricot curls a seemly *coiffure* for a female head?"

"Much better than a dirty white mountain alive with insects."

"Nits are one of life's trials inflicted upon us by the Almighty. One can't avoid 'em, either in wigs or growing hair."

"I never had such things till I came here."

"How dare you imply that my house is not clean? I'm surprised at you, Emily, very surprised indeed!"

Mrs. Montizambia turned her back in dudgeon and prepared for her afternoon nap. It was hot and airless in the overcrowded room, a huge fire burned in the basket grate, sawdust bags like long red sausages excluded any draughts that might have percolated between window-sashes. Fusty smells emanated from Roscius and the bits of decayed apple and celery he had tossed on the carpet; odours of dust, dye and snuff were drawn by the fire from Mrs. Montizambia's old scarlet tabby. The combined exhalations rendered Emily so faint and sick she was obliged to get up and creep to the window, hoping for fresher air. By removing one of the sawdust bags she persuaded herself that she obtained it.

In the distance a German band played Cimarosa's *La ballerina amante*; near by a man shouted: "Hot loaves! Hot spiced ginger-

bread!" At the milliner's door a ragged boy tried to sell handboxes covered with fancy paper; a bellows-mender trudged past carrying a bag of tools across his shoulder.

Inside the room Mrs. Montizambia snored with her mouth open while Roscius made rich chuckling noises in his throat. Quite suddenly Emily knew she could endure no more. . . .

At half-past four Mrs. Montizambia awoke in ill humour; at five they dined off a bean tansy and a flummery served on a round table drawn up to the fire. Afterwards they played piquet; at nine they drank tea, and at ten Emily was permitted to go to bed.

On the following morning, when Mrs. Montizambia and Roscius were marketing in Covent Garden, Emily intercepted Maria as she left the house to watch a rehearsal of *All for Love*. The theatre was Drury Lane, and Maria willingly agreed to go out between the acts to present Emily's letter to Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh waiting in the piazza. Despite her failure to keep the appointment on the previous day, Emily never doubted he would be there, any more than she questioned her ability to make him act in the manner she wished. In the early hours of morning, by the light of a dip, she had composed an appeal to Sir Harry's vanity which she believed to be irresistible. After dwelling on her prison-like environment and the restrictions imposed on her talents, she asked for the advice of "her generous and truly trusted friend", advice which "she hoped to avail herself of when she kept the rondievos on Wednesday in the Little Piatsia". To this epistle she added a pious "God bless you!" and affixed her name. When the whole was neatly transcribed upon a sheet of Mrs. Montizambia's French-glazed gilt paper, she surveyed it complacently.

The weather was damp, misty and considerably colder than on the preceding day, thus Emily suffered less from the big fire kept up by Mrs. Montizambia. During the morning a diversion was caused by one of Mr. Macklin's pupils falling into hysterics as a result of his caustic criticism, an episode that provided a cheerful topic unexhausted at dinner-time. Anxious to finish what she had begun, Emily applied herself to the paper-filigree façade of Drury Lane Theatre, and succeeded even to making the heraldic beasts on the pediment. This achievement brought her the satisfaction felt by a traveller whose commissions are executed before he sets forth.

In the evening Mr. Charles Macklin, his wife and Maria came to drink tea and exchange theatre gossip. Emily heard commendations

of Jane Farmer's performance as the "Player Queen"; she also received a cocked-hat note smuggled into her hand by Maria. Surreptitiously opening it she read: "*Tout-à-vous sous tous les rapports,*" which conveyed little except that Sir Harry would keep the appointment.

Retiring late, they rose early, in order that Mrs. Montizambia's hair might be curled and craped for her visit to Twickenham. The jaunt for which she prepared was the last ceremonious call of the year. When she and Mrs. Clive visited each other informally they travelled by the "short stage" plying between The Angel at St. Clement's and The Cross at Twickenham; once every quarter Mr. Horace Walpole placed his coach at his neighbour's disposal to convey Mrs. Montizambia in state to and from Little Strawberry Hill.

While her benefactress was getting ready, Emily appeased a guilty conscience by keeping the hair-dresser supplied with hot pincing-irons heated in the parlour fire, and when Mrs. Montizambia, in a white dimity greatcoat, came to her breakfast, Emily went without so that she might sew lace ruffles into the sleeves of a best gown.

A late sunrise brought the promise of a lovely day. Over tiled roofs and weathered bricks flowed a benign glow. Here and there a high window, catching a shaft of light, flung it back in a dazzle of glancing flame. Mr. Walpole's coach entered the cheerful street with the dash and clatter befitting an elegant vehicle. Shaped like a box widening from its base, it had six glass windows and a roof rising in a swelling curve. Painted deep blue and embellished with gilded scrolls, its colouring was matched by the liveries of coachman and footman, and complemented by a pair of flea-bitten greys.

The height of Mrs. Montizambia's coiffure and the dimensions of her hoop frustrated attempts to insinuate herself through the carriage door until Emily folded together the cane rings and tilted them sideways. Flustered but triumphant, the traveller dived forward, sat down heavily, and searched with her feet for her valise.

Climbing on the step, Emily leant through the window. "Good-bye and God bless you! Never think I wasn't grateful."

Mrs. Montizambia beamed upon her with misty eyes. "Good girl, good girl. I know at the bottom you are very devoted to me, my dear, very devoted to me!"

The footman skipped up behind, the coachman cracked his whip and Mrs. Montizambia's towering head-dress tipped like a falling mountain as the horses set the great wheels in motion.



CHAPTER NINE

EMILY so quickly adapted herself to a new environment that, looking back, she found it difficult to recollect herself in other surroundings. In a few weeks she discarded all rules of behaviour that had curbed her in subordinate situations. After yielding to Sir Harry's importunities, she claimed the right to do as she pleased, a demand which met with no opposition. A wild and graceless wanton suited the baronet's robust tastes better than a well-mannered lady-love. He taught her to ride, and, finding her utterly fearless, dressed her in breeches and a man's riding-coat and took her hunting, to the scandal of the neighbourhood. Emily cared naught for outraged glances. With tawny ringlets blowing back from her face, she leapt hedges and ditches and felt like a goddess.

Though gentry such as Sir James Peachy of West Dean and Mr. Thistlethwaite of Southwick might look askance, it was otherwise with gentlemen who came from London to shoot over Sir Harry's extensive preserves. Set in the valley of Harting, Sussex, about a mile and a half from the Hampshire border, Uppark was near enough to Town for a traveller in a chaise-and-pair to accomplish the journey in something under eight hours, or, if he wished to travel economically, the Portsmouth Coach set down passengers at the 'Red Lion' at Petersfield.

Hospitable, rich and good-natured, Sir Harry was delighted to entertain any number of guests so long as they were willing to hunt, shoot, attend local cock-fights and drink until they must be relieved of their stocks. Young Macaronis, after meeting Emily, returned to town raving of her loveliness. Sir Harry was discovered to be immensely popular, casual acquaintances became eager to know him better, and proposed themselves for a few days' shooting.

Emily accepted them all with easy good-fellowship. Unaffected and

anxious to please, she threw herself into the pleasant task of entertaining. Should a guest wish a companion for riding, she was willing to accompany him anywhere and over any obstacle. If his fancy was for art, she dressed herself in a white night-sack and assumed the attitudes of neo-Etruscan figures on Mr. Wedgwood's pottery. Did the company request a song, she was ready to oblige with one of the ribald ballads she had heard issuing from the gin-houses and taverns in Seven Dials. Revelling in every sociable act, save the one she must share alone with Sir Harry, she hit upon the happy expedient of encouraging guests and host to drink so freely that they must spend the night together under the dining-table. Safe in the wide solitude of old Matthew Fetherstonhaugh's four-post bed, she reflected philosophically on the human state which decreed a woman's body to be her only commercial asset. Either she could fret it away in hard toil for which her reward would be daily bread, or, by keeping it soft and comely, she could barter it for luxury. . . .

Although Sir Harry referred to himself as a West Sussex man, actually his ancestors came from Northumberland. Uppark, with the manors of South and East Harting, was purchased by Matthew Fetherstonhaugh from Charles, third Earl of Tankerville, in 1746, the same year in which Matthew inherited the fortune and possessions of his kinsman, Sir Harry Fetherstone of Blakesware. Following the injunction of the will, Matthew obtained a continuation of the Baronetage by a Patent dated the 3rd of January 1747. As Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh he became a Member of Parliament for Morpeth in Northumberland, and later represented Portsmouth.

Sir Harry, inheriting his father's estate in 1774, considered the family prestige so well established that nothing more was required to further it. Acting on this conviction, he amused himself with hunting, shooting, cocking and in attending prize-fights at Portsmouth Dock until he came of age, when he set forth on the Grand Tour. The early months of 1776 found the baronet in Naples with the Duke of Hamilton, whose romantic temperament had entangled him with a lady encumbered by five hundred pounds of debt, which later became the price of his release. While Sir William Hamilton, the British Minister, ransomed his imprudent kinsman, Sir Harry felt bound to share the Duke's exile at Castello, a cold, damp domicile on the slopes of Monte Miletto with an unfounded reputation for wild boars and game. Negotiations concluded by Sir William Hamilton, the two young men removed to Rome much chastened by the

price of dalliance. Soberly they visited St. Peter's, the Vatican, the Campidoglio, museums, churches. Apparellled in morning dress, with his ginger hair fashionably dressed in clubs on either side of his face, Sir Harry sat for his portrait to Pompeo Girolamo Batoni. He purchased pictures by approved masters, shell cameos, sulphur casts, bronzes; prudently avoiding the terra-cottas, marbles and Etruscan vases with which his friend the Duke of Hamilton had burdened himself. Crossing the continent in a leisurely manner, Sir Harry reached England in high summer. After depositing his *virtu* at Up-park, he returned to town and became a member of Brooks's and White's, where he made a number of *tonish* friends who taught him to play faro and macao. He joined the Jockey Club and was a regular attendant at the Doncaster and Newmarket races. The theatre was honoured by his patronage, he became a welcome visitor at Charlotte Hayes's and at less luxurious bagnios in Exeter Street. His tastes made such inroads into his fortune that on reaching twenty-five he was obliged to review his position. This he did in a practical manner by selling some hundreds of oak trees to the Navy Board, a transaction that not only repaired his finances, but, by disclosing views of the Isle of Wight and St. Helen's, improved the amenities of the park. Unhappily Emy's bedroom had not this lovely vista, but looked over a gravel courtyard to a distant wood.

Up-park was crowded with visitors over Christmas week. The party commenced on the 22nd of December with a cock-fight in the coach-house, to celebrate Sir Harry's twenty-sixth birthday, the main fight being between four pairs of white piles, which he had himself trained for the pit, and four pairs of Staffordshire duns, brought from Portsmouth Dock by the landlord of the 'Admiral Anson'. Emily, who had helped to feed the cocks and cosset them after sparring matches, was as eager to watch the fight as any of the devotees leaning on the barrier of the matting-covered ring. Sir Harry had given her thirty guineas to stake, and she had placed it all upon Cupidy, a spirited one-year-old fighting cock entering the pit for the first time. Cupidy had learnt to eat from her hand and to lie in her arms while she ruffled his feathers; when she called, he came running with ridiculous long strides, flapping his wings to bring him the faster.

Emily insisted upon carrying Cupidy to the ring side, and while "long heels" were strapped to his legs, she stood beside the table which formed a dais for the judge's chair, disapproving the sharp metal spurs. Hitherto she had only seen sparring matches when cocks

wore leather guards over their natural spurs, a protection that allowed them to fight without coming to harm.

Emily had difficulty in holding Cupidy when he caught sight of the strange cocks. Craning his neck and stiffening his body, he danced jerkily from side to side, uttering chuckling sounds of derision that rose to a challenging cry. The call was answered by all the other cocks crowing in raucous unison.

Cupidy was to fight in the first match against a scraggy Staffordshire dun standing on long, thin legs. Sir Harry and the inn-keeper leaning over the barrier on opposite sides of the ring, held their cocks on interlocked fingers close to the matting, and thrice swung them forward. On the starter shouting "Go", they dropped the birds, which made for each other with stiff, tilting struts. Cupidy was the quicker and with his sharp bill, furiously set upon his antagonist, plucking out tufts of feathers and exposing yellow skin. Prancing round each other, darting forward in feints, falling back to attack in earnest and a shower of falling feathers, the two furious little birds were pathetic in their abbreviated battle plumage. Wings were trimmed at a slope, and tails shortened; hackle and rump feathers had been reduced and combs were cut so close as to be nothing more than ridges. Emily was suddenly bitterly ashamed of having helped to clip the gallant little cock. Beauty and courage should go together. . . .

She averted her eyes because Cupidy, despite his bold attack, was getting the worst of the encounter. An iron lantern hanging from a rope above the ring cast a circle of light over the fighting cocks and upon the faces of spectators. Beside Emily sat Major Battine and his fifteen-year-old clever son William, who clenched his teeth so tightly that a nerve below the junction of his jaw quivered like the pulsing gills of a fish. Emily's other neighbour had the pinched face of an alabaster effigy and thin, bloodless lips which every now and again parted to allow a delicate, pointed tongue to flicker across them. He wore finely embroidered clothes of oyster silk, a toupee with a club on either side of his face and a patch beside his evil eyes. His old hands, veined, bony and parchment white, clasped a snuff-box adorned with a miniature of Beauty at the Bath.

There was no sound in the coach-house save the deep breathing of men, the chink of money as new bets were laid, and the scratching of claws on matting. The inn-keeper had removed his wig and sat with shaven skull. Colonel Mordaunt, elevated above the ring, leant

over the back of a straddling-chair to follow with his index finger the movements of the cocks. Over the lime-washed walls and ceiling, across Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh's great travelling coach, spread Colonel Mordaunt's crouching shadow, threatening and vigilant.

A sudden craning forward of spectators, and the hissing of tense breathing, made Emily again look into the pit. She pressed her hand to her mouth to stifle a cry. Below, within reach of her arms, lay Cupidy, a stance for the battered but triumphant Staffordshire fighting cock. Everywhere floated feathers, white feathers and dun feathers, blowing hither and thither at the whim of a chilly draught. Cupidy, slowly raising his poor battered head, feebly pecked the claw of his enemy. The dun cock looked down, then, lifting his bright spur, dug it into Cupidy's breast and kicked back his yellow leg. Emily heard a rip and saw a flight of white feathers scurry high in the air; but the dun's triumphant crow was stifled in his throat. In a lightning gesture she grasped the Staffordshire cock and flung him across the ring. Snatching Cupidy from the matting, she brought him to the warmth of her bosom. Startled, angry faces accused her as she leapt to her feet and pushed through the crowd.

Sir Harry furiously shouted: "Damn you, Emily, what are you doing?"

The big door opened to her touch; a babel of voices pursued her across the dark yard.

It was the act of a moment to dash past the railed shrubbery to the flight of steps ascending to the long window of the saloon. The hasp swung, but the cream brocade curtain was pulled down and impeded entry. Thrusting it aside she heard the material rip. . . . 'Twas the finest Spitalfields silk, Sir Harry wouldn't be best pleased when he saw the rent. . . .

Candle-flames, flickering in the draught, awakened a million lights in the chandeliers hanging in ice-like cascades from the high ceiling, and gave an illusion of activity to the figures in the tapestries stretched along the walls. A fire gleamed in the shining steel grate, decanters and glasses were set out, cold dishes were arranged on a side table. Out in the hall rows of candlesticks stood ready filled to guide visitors to bed. Emily took one and lit the candle at a scone. Up the stairs successions of shadows met her and streaked past. . . . They grew up from the floor of the landing to slip away into dark oblongs of open doors. . . .

To accommodate an extra visitor Emily had vacated her own room

to share Sir Harry's apartment, which was grandly embellished with a piece of tapestry superimposed upon the patterned flock paper. The four-post bed, intimately narrow, was upholstered in crimson brocade and ornamented at the corners with gilded plump cupids leaning forward as if to fly. Crimson curtains of Queen Anne design hung from ornate pelmets over the long windows. A large walnut cupboard stood on one side of the white marble chimney-piece, on the other a tall chest of drawers.

Shutting the door, Emily bolted it behind her, then, carrying Cupidy to the hearth, she set the candle on the floor the better to examine him. As she turned the cock over, the metal spurs chinked together. Deftly she unwound the fastenings and cast the cruel spikes into the heart of the fire.

"Oh, my pretty love, can you forgive your Emy for wagering thirty guineas on your poor little body? Had I guessed how 'twould be I'd have carried you t'other side of England before I'd let you fight."

But Cupidy responded not, his remaining eye showed as a black slit, while from the socket of the other oozed a single tear of blood.

By prising open his bill with her finger-nail, Emily managed to force in a few drops of brandy from the flask kept by Sir Harry under the bolster. Cupidy's body quivered, and his skinny eye-lids opened, revealing the whole of his jet-black eye. Much encouraged, she increased her efforts to restore his life. She knew that a cock, surviving a fight, must have the blood sucked from his wounds, which should then be washed with warm salt water. The water in the ewer was icy cold and salt was lacking, but as she applied her rosy lips to Cupidy's torn skin, so her hot tears rained down. He responded to her ministrations by feebly snuggling into her arms; rocking him like a baby, she sat on the floor with the fire-light dancing on her lovely, tender face.

Owls hooted in the woods; she heard the eerie bark of a fox; inside the mansion rustlings and sharp cracks seemed to betray ghostly watchers lurking in dark corridors and vast, empty rooms. Emily got up, crossed to a window, and pulled the cords of the curtain. Rising, it revealed a full moon floating above the wood; deer asleep in the park; servants crossing the gravelled courtyard to their quarters in the separate buildings uprising left and right. The stable clock struck ten; its ancient tongue ran thin and clear across the moonlit valley. Emily closed the shutters and returned to the fire.

Cupidy had struggled from the flannel petticoat in which he was

wrapped and lay panting. His beak, denuded of surrounding plumage, looked wide and comical as the bill of a fledgling. The forlorn transformation of the handsome little cock renewed Emily's contrition and her tears.

Voices sounded as Sir Harry and his guests rounded the corner of the house. Colonel Mordaunt's peremptory delivery could be distinguished above the *tomish* drawl of fashion and the blurred accents of Sussex. The front door opened with a crash; footsteps clattered and lisped as the company filed towards the saloon. Corks popped and glasses chinked, someone stirred the fire and upset a heavy log into the fender. Presently Sir Harry came into the hall and shouted for a servant, then his heavy tread sounded on the stairs.

Emily waited breathlessly while he stumbled along the corridor to the bedroom door. He tried to open it, and finding it would not yield, twisted the knob violently. "You in there, Emily?" he suspiciously demanded.

She made no response,

Banging his fist on the panel he shouted: "None of your tricks! Open the door when I tell you."

Her silk skirts rustled as she tip-toed across the room. Leaning against the jamb, she whispered through the crack: "I've locked the door because I wish to be alone."

Indignation temporarily bereft the baronet of speech. He made queer angry noises before he managed to articulate: "Be alone? You've no right to be alone! What do ye think I keep you for? And I've more to say than that, my girl, so open the door and take your physic before it gets bitter."

"'Tis no use your talking to me, because my mind's made up. The only way you'll get in is by breaking the lock, and that'll make you look foolish in the eyes of your friends. Already they must be wondering why you've left them."

"They'd be surprised had I not, for each rails at you for the spoilt fight. 'Twill cost me heavy for the cock you killed."

"Did it die? Oh, how happy you make me—I only hope it suffered."

"Damn it, Emily, ye deserve a good beating, and I swear I'll give ye one when I get in."

"Then 'tis locked the door will stay, and the sooner you quit the cold passage the wiser you will be."

To assert his right, Sir Harry administered further thumps upon the panel before descending to more convivial company.

Listening to boisterous voices and popping corks, Emily sat with Cupidy in her lap until the early hours of morning. Sometimes she leaned forward to replenish the fire, at others she tried to force brandy into Cupidy's beak. Songs and laughter declined into maudlin soliloquies, punctuated by the shattering of glasses as they fell from relaxed fingers. Gradually the room grew colder, and the candle, burning low, bred agile shadows to quaver up the walls and over the ceiling.

With the lengthening of her vigil, so Emily's spirits ebbed. Pictures uprose in her mind of scenes through which she had passed since leaving Chatham Place, deprived in retrospect of the intoxicating excitement that had justified each wild act. If enthusiasm vindicated the past, what plea could be made for the present? . . . Certainly 'twas not love for Sir Harry that kept her at Uppark. . . . How excuse a girl who would rather be a gentleman's light o' love than submit to dull servitude? 'Twas wicked she was, and no doubt about it, but there was no going back. If a girl once took to a reckless life she was spoilt for the tame ways of duty. . . .

The candle sputtered to its end amid a reek of charred wick and hot wax just as Cupidy gave a little quiver and died. Holding his drooping body to the fire, Emily tried to see by the glowing embers. Indifferent as the light was, it sufficed to destroy hope. Very gently she wrapped the cock in her petticoat, and, carrying him stumbly, laid him in a drawer of the tallboy. Her limbs, numb from sitting on the floor, hardly supported her to the side of the bed, and she had to help herself along by clutching the post. It was the work of a minute to discard her gown and untie the tapes of her hoop. She let it lie in a ring upon the floor while she released herself from the heavily whaleboned stays that cramped her lovely body. Sir Harry admired a slender waist and overtopping bosom, and with this figure in view had himself instructed Mrs. Harman at her shop in New Bond Street which displayed the Queen's arms over the door. The result was sufficiently satisfactory to justify the royal staymaker's claim: "The most massy figure can be curbed into modish lines by a pair of Mrs. Harman's much admired patent stays."

Liberated from bondage, Emily flung herself into the depths of the feather mattress. Not until that moment had she realized her weariness, but exhaustion did not bring sleep. As her head touched the pillow so thoughts and ideas tumbled over each other. Apprehensions sprang into the foreground, and the chances of her precarious posi-

tion painted themselves in lurid colours. What would she do if Sir Harry turned her out? . . . What a foolish girl she'd been to defy her protector. . . . Indeed her high temper would prove her undoing. . . . She would never admit she had done wrong in killing the dun cock. . . . But a gentleman had the right to enter his room and to act as he pleased towards a girl kept as bed-mate. . . . Perhaps undutiful conduct would bring dismissal in the morning? Good God! What would she do, stranded penniless in a countrified place? 'Twould be wise to make peace now and treat him to such warm kisses that he'd hesitate to send her away. . . .

Scrambling from bed, Emily pattered on bare feet to the door and twisted the key. It was dark in the corridor and she had to feel her way to the stair-head. Two candles still burnt in the hall, and from the open door of the saloon fell a slant of light. Wine fumes tainted the cold air and silence was ripped and torn by snores of drunken sleepers. Leaning over the banisters, Emily cautiously descended, but not so quietly as to escape the vigilance of Werke, Sir Harry's red setter, which came running from the lighted room. On seeing Emily, he strangled a bark and waved his feathery tail. Accompanying her as she edged along the wall, he looked up with inquiring amber eyes as she cautiously peered into the saloon. A curious spectacle confronted her. Gentlemen, emitting ugly sounds from their open mouths, reclined slackly in Chippendale chairs or lolled with sprawling legs and sunken heads. Others, relieved of their stocks, lay upon the floor in huddled heaps of silk, velvet and nankin. Finding that her presence would be unnoticed, Emily ventured boldly into the doorway for a better inspection. Sir Harry's legs, protruding beneath a table, could be distinguished by shoe buckles and small-clothes. The old beau, who had been her neighbour at the cock-fight, had spilled a glass of port over his lovely oyster-coloured clothes. . . . The stain looked like blood from his heart. . . . His wig was awry and showed his veined, bony skull; his stock was off and his skinny parchment neck hung back, a poignant likeness of poor Cupidy's plucked by the victorious dun. In an access of sympathy, Emily hurried into the room and gently adjusted the wig and lifted the limp old head to an easier position without disturbing the reedy snores that agitated his thin nostrils.

Emily wandered among the sleeping guests. She made up the fire, snuffed the candles and found a cushion for the red setter to lie upon, all the time conscious of the ironic eyes of Sir Harry Fether-

stone looking down from the wall. His cadaverous, proud face was framed in a reddish-brown periwig; a lace jabot showed beneath his chin. In 1747 the picture and his fortune had been bequeathed to his nephew, Matthew Fetherstonhaugh; ever since, his painted eyes had critically watched the acts of his heirs.

Emily always felt hypnotized by the portrait, and when so forgetful as to meet the searching dark eyes, had difficulty in retreating. It was so now. Had she not been startled by an explosive sound behind her, she might have remained magnetized until morning. Turning quickly, she beheld a very childish young gentleman being violently sick upon the Passavant carpet. For some moments she watched him with the detachment peculiar to situations met with in dreams; she pinched herself to make sure she was awake. Meanwhile the young gentleman, the worst paroxysm over, gazed at her with hollow, apologetic eyes.

"I'm sorry, ma'am," he gasped.

"It isn't my carpet," Emily truthfully explained.

"I'm sorry you should see me behaving like a beast, ma'am."

"Never mind, 'tis used I've grown to ugly sights. I'll fetch you a drink of water; then you'll feel better."

Struggling to his feet, he leant shakily against a chair. "I'd like to get out of this room, ma'am, into fresh air."

"You'd best get to bed, and 'tis cold enough upstairs to revive a gin-drinker of Drury Lane."

"I'm not that indeed, ma'am, and until this night I've tasted nothing stronger than grog."

"Then 'tis a pity you didn't keep to sober ways," Emily censoriously responded.

"Yes, ma'am."

She found herself obliged to help him upstairs, and on the attic landing he again became so ill that she almost carried him along the passage to his destination in the north-western extremity of the mansion. From his slit of a room, overlooking kitchens and stables, Emily deemed him a visitor of trifling consequence, and addressed him accordingly.

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen, ma'am."

Emily forgot that her own years numbered no more. "You should be at home with your mother."

"Oh no, ma'am, because I serve the King. I'm a midshipman in his

Majesty's ship *Artois*, a magnificent frigate we captured from the Frenchies and now commanded by Captain Willett Payne."

Emily's heart lost a beat and then raced excitedly. "Is Captain Payne at Portsmouth Dock?"

"No, ma'am, the ship was proceeding to Chatham to be paid; the Captain only called at Haslar to land some of the people who contracted a low fever when the *Artois* lay in the Tagus. 'Twas two months ago, and I'm well now, ma'am, and expecting to rejoin the frigate on her re-commissioning."

"If I write a letter will you deliver it to your Captain?"

"Oh, certainly, ma'am."

The young gentleman looked so childish and wretched that Emily volunteered to put him to bed, an offer he accepted with fervent gratitude. She had performed the office so often for Sir Harry that she executed the task with celerity.

In bed the midshipman dropped the manly ways he had tried to assume downstairs. Clutching her neck, he pulled her face to his and patted it. "You're just like mother," he said—"so kind and gentle. But you're beautiful, and she just looks good. I'd be pleased if you kissed me, ma'am—if you wouldn't think it wrong to kiss a man."

Emily gave him a warm hug and pressed her lips to his forehead. "Sleep sound, and I'll give you a James's Powder in the morning."

On returning to her room she found the fire out, but this time when she climbed into the feather bed she slept free from the misgivings that an hour ago had sent her roaming.

In the early morning she was awakened by hoarse voices shouting for Bristol water and emetics, by hasty footsteps of servants, and sounds of physical tribulations. Visitors stumbled along the landing and banged bedroom doors; on the lawn Werke barked at a doe trespassing from the park.

Emily sat up in bed to listen to Sir Harry stumping up the oak stairs. Flinging open the door, he stood revealed by a candle held askew. Bloodshot eyes blinked from a pale, puffy face. He was stockless and his waistcoat was undone; the black shalloon tying his hair had slipped to the end of his queue, releasing semi-powdered strands that fell upon his shoulders.

He entered the room and slammed the door with a backward kick. Lurching to the chimney-piece, he slid the candlestick along the shelf, then he crossed to the windows and folded the shutters against the walls. Ruffled pewter clouds reflected in green and yellow lights

the stormy sunrise; the summit of Hartung Hill loomed black and lowering.

Sir Harry retched noisily.

"Fennel tea would do you good," Emily remarked in brightly sympathetic tones.

Groaning, he pressed his aching head against the window-pane. "Sometimes I think you're a fool, Emily."

Exercising unusual prudence, she stifled an angry retort and watched her patron morosely kick off his shoes and divest himself of coat and waistcoat. In a fine lawn shirt and tightly girt breeches he looked to advantage, muscular and well made, his body showed only the threat of flesh that later would incommode.

Gravitating towards his side of the bed, Sir Harry stripped off his clothes as he came. Emily eyed him apprehensively, in no mood for love-making. Shuddering she caught his sour breath. Fears proved unfounded; dropping into bed, he evinced less interest in his mistress than in the bolster supporting his head.

Every moment the room grew lighter. There was no warmth or radiance in the sunrise, only an increased pallid illumination that discovered netted black branches of trees and grey roofs of Horsham stone. In the bedroom daylight met and vanquished the flickering candle-flame; gradually a dark oblong on the walls revealed itself as a hunting scene after Teniers woven by François Van der Borgh, one of a set of tapestries bought by Sir Matthew in Brussels to furnish his mansion.

The moment Sir Harry dropped into an uneasy doze, Emily slipped out of bed and dressed herself. When she was ready to go downstairs she wore a sprigged muslin cap over her short, vivid curls. Her plain blue woollen gown had a folded muslin kerchief at the neck and ruffles in the elbow-sleeves. She wore no hoop, an omission rendering her skirt so long that she had to lift it to avoid treading on the hem.

Knowing that Sir Harry and his guests would require no breakfast, the servants had not troubled to prepare it. Fires were unlighted, and in the big dining-room the shutters were still closed. Wandering into the saloon, Emily found a yawning footman slowly collecting decanters and wine-glasses from last night's debauch.

"Where have you laid my breakfast?" she demanded.

"Nowhere, darling," he answered with a smirk.

Emily's face reddened. "If you talk like that, I'll pay you. Servants

must speak respectful to their betters, I always had to. . . ." She bit her lip, realizing her admission. The slip increased the fury of her attack: "Have done with your insolent looks and be off to order my breakfast and light a roaring fire in the little parlour. There's to be tay and sweet chocolate, eggs and bacon, strawberry conserve and honey, for I'm expecting a gentleman to eat with me, and 'twill do none of you benefit when I tell your master that you leave me and his guest to freeze and starve."

The footman looked sour, but, doing as he was bid, dawdled towards the underground passage bearing on his upraised palm a tray loaded with wine-glasses.

Although she was to breakfast, Emily could not flatter herself on getting the best of the encounter. Tremulous with anger, she went to the ante-room where Sir Harry kept drenches and embrocations for horses as well as remedies for himself. In a small drawer of a walnut bureau she found the Englishman's panacea for all ills—James's Powders. Indifferent that only one remained, she carried it into the dining-room, where she appropriated a spoon and a carafe of water. Armed with this booty, she posted to the first floor and along the deserted landing to the oak cockle-stair leading to the midshipman's quarters. She found him asleep, with his trowsled head resting on an outflung arm. A kiss awakened him, and he lay smiling up at her with a dissipated, childish face.

"How do you feel? I can't ask you by name, because I know it not."

"Cæsar Bacon, ma'am, of Seafeld House, Castletown."

"Where's Castletown?"

"In the Isle of Man, ma'am, which belongs to the Duke of Athol."

"That sounds far off. How do people live there?"

"By smuggling, ma'am. 'Tis said we defraud Great Britain of three hundred thousand a year."

"Have you been out with the smugglers?"

"I wouldn't say," he answered evasively.

"'Tis punishment you deserve, so put out your tongue, Cæsar."

Dexterously Emily poured upon it Doctor James's Powder. "Now take a drink from the carafe, for I've no tumbler to offer."

Because he was shaky after the night's carousal, Emily stayed and helped him to dress, a proceeding robbed of impropriety in Cæsar's view by the fact that she might have been his mother.

They enjoyed a comfortable breakfast together, and while the midshipman ate a mixture of honey and strawberry conserve, Emily com-

posed a letter to Captain Payne explicit of her distaste for her present situation, with a suggestion that, as he was now posted to a fine frigate, he could well afford to accommodate her on board. Failing this, she proposed a lodging in the nearest port, because she was "his miserable but ever devoted Emily Lyon".

When the epistle was sanded, folded and wafered, Emily stitched it into the lining of Cæsar's mulberry-coloured coat and enjoined him not to forget it.

The day advanced to noon without Sir Harry or his guests emerging from their chambers. During the morning Emily ventured into the bedroom to retrieve the body of Cupidy for interment in the grave Cæsar had dug beside a silver larch, a situation chosen because of a fancied resemblance between the tree and the gallant white cock. Later she visited the bedroom again to change into her green velvet riding-habit; on both occasions Sir Harry snored heavily within the closed curtains of the bed.

Cæsar Bacon had to be at Portsmouth Dock by nightfall; as Emily had nothing to do, she volunteered to ride with him part way. They exchanged farewells and tokens on the edge of Stanstead Forest; Emily gave him her hair ribbon as a keepsake, he reciprocated with a button from his coat. They waved to each other until Cæsar dropped down the hill behind Stanstead House.

Every room was illuminated when Emily returned to Uppark. No servant waited at the door, so she rode on to the block of buildings comprising stables and kitchens adjacent to the western façade. In a harness-room she found coachmen and grooms casting dice by the light of storm-lanterns. One of the men cheekily dismounted her and led the mare away. Emily descended the stone steps to the underground passage beneath the courtyard through which food and necessities were unobtrusively conveyed to the mansion.

Expecting the usual boisterous welcome, she passed from one empty room into another until she discovered Sir Harry and his guests assembled like a tribunal in the white-and-gold-panelled dining-room. Chilly silence and hostile glances confounded her. Gazing in bewilderment, she demanded: "Are you all struck dumb? Such unfriendly faces I never saw. My God! One 'ud think you were all staring at a wretch in the pillory."

Sir Harry cleared his throat: "*Mes amis*, Emily, are not disposed to overlook your mischievous action during *le combat de coqs*; the losses ye have caused have fallen heavily upon some of us."

Murmurs of approval greeted this speech. The old gallant who had worn the oyster-coloured clothes shut his snuff-box with a snap as he said maliciously: "Upon my soul, Fetherstone, I'd turn a strumpet from my house who treated me as ye've been served. 'Faith! I've flung out many a wench in her shift for less!"

"You old devil!" cried Emily; "and only last night I made your drunken old head comfortable! Had I guessed what a nasty old beast you are I'd have bumped your bald pate on the floor, so I would!"

Her outburst caused consternation. Affronted faces turned to Sir Harry, questioning what action he would take. Lazy, amiable and pig-headed, the baronet was temperamentally averse to any drastic or hasty policy; furthermore, he resented interference. Gad! He supposed he was at liberty to manage his affairs as he pleased? . . . Emily was the finest-looking female in the country, damned if she wasn't! Charlotte Hayes had never seen such a beauty. . . . Admitted it herself. . . . A brothel-keeper wouldn't make an acknowledgement disparaging to her establishment unless true. . . . Too much fuss was being made over a peccadillo. . . . Perhaps old General de Gallière coveted Emily for his own *chère amie*? No chicanery of *ton* was surprising. . . .

Actuated by mistrust, Sir Harry addressed Emily with severity he no longer felt. "You will go to your chamber and remain there during *le séjour* of my friends. Afterwards I shall consider what steps to take."

"'Tis strange how men hang together against a woman without troubling to hear her case!"

General de Gallière's tongue flickered across his thin lips. "As logic is rarely a strong point with ladies, we will not waste time seeking it in a Cyprian."

"Old viper! I hope you'll die of your own venom!" Giving him no time to retort, she retreated and slammed the door.

Up in her room Emily stormed to and fro. Vengeful schemes and incoherent thoughts raced through her mind. Last year a Chester woman poisoned her lover with a paste of holly berries. . . . Surely Captain Payne would take pity on poor Emy when he knew of her plight? . . . How different her position would have been had she kept that thirty guineas instead of staking it on Cupidy! . . . The money would have paid the coach fare to London with enough over

for lodgings till something turned up. . . . What could a girl do who had neither funds nor friends? . . .

The stable clock struck five; simultaneously the rattle of dish-covers announced the approach of dinner-waggon loaded in the distant kitchens. Emily's steps faltered. 'Twas an age since breakfast. . . .

Torn between pride and hunger, she gravitated nearer and nearer to the door. Capitulating to necessity, she grasped the handle, only to discover herself a prisoner.



CHAPTER TEN

EMILY remained a captive while Sir Harry and his guests enjoyed three days' shooting in the Bolton plantations, at Mill Hanger and in the coverts at Lady Holt. When Sir Harry came to bed on Christmas Eve, Emily recited her grievances and threatened to leave if justice were not done. "If ye go," the baronet retorted, "'twill be without money or the gowns I have bought."

Comfort and security had sapped independence, and Emily no longer had courage to act on reckless impulse. In June she would have spoken her mind and gone; in December she thought of consequences. Humiliated by her own cowardice, she appeared docile and ceased to complain, a transition so flattering to her protector that he availed himself of her services; an obligation acknowledged on Christmas Day by a slice of roast peacock and a helping of plum pudding.

Sir Harry and his party were guests of the Duke of Norfolk from December the 27th to the New Year; afterwards the company would disperse. In a straight line the distance to Arundel Castle was under fifteen miles, but roads were so hilly, circuitous and bad that gentlemen with chaises elected to go by way of Chichester, where fresh post-horses were procurable.

On taking leave of Emily, Sir Harry restored the bedroom key to the lock. His kiss was warm, his manner benign; he implied that misdeeds were forgiven and a full resumption of his favours might be anticipated on his return.

Emily celebrated her liberty by ordering her mare to be saddled; while waiting, she inspected the breakfast-table and helped herself to bread, venison and a wedge of game-pie, which she packed together in a sheet of the *Morning Herald*. Thus provisioned, she roamed until dusk, riding through South Harting, past the church with its

shingle spire, through Rogate to the common, and back by way of Trotton and East Harting. Her ride, which started in frosty sunshine, ended in a scurry of snow driven on a sharp north wind.

During the evening the temperature continued to fall, interpreting to Emily the discomforts peculiar to mansions that cannot adequately be heated. No warmth remained from fires that yesterday blazed in every grate, their radiance had perished completely as the clamour of roistering voices. Passages and great rooms awakened to a chilly sepulchral life of their own. The air quickened to a faster vibration, gentle winds caressed her face, sharp raps sounded on furniture and wainscoting. Alarmed by inexplicable impressions, Emily critically pondered upon Sir Harry's aristocratic mode of living which relegated servants to other dwellings. 'Twould be happier, she thought, to be a downtrodden kitchen-wench, sleeping sociably three in a bed, than to be Emily Lyon isolated with ghosts in the grandeur of an ancestral home.

Contrary to her expectations, she slept soundly, and awakened late to the padded hush of snow. Thrown upon the resources of the house, she decided to play her own accompaniments on the spinet in the red drawing-room. The antiquated instrument was part of the dower brought by Christopher Lethieullier's only daughter, and stood beneath a portrait of sweet-faced Sarah, painted before her marriage to Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh. Emily was both surprised and chagrined when only tinkling discords were created by her intelligently quirked fingers. Humbled into striking single notes, she managed to pick out an air to go with *The Lass of Peaty's Mill*; unhappily the concert ended abruptly, due to the quill plectra splitting one after another, a mishap rendering the strings dumb.

On the prowl again, Emily poked into dark closets and ransacked drawers without finding anything beguiling until, climbing to a lumber room high in the roof, she acclaimed, with a cry of pleasure, a view of a convoy at anchor off St. Helen's. Snow had effected a curious change in perspective, diminishing the stretch of land between Uppark and the coast, while magnifying Spithead and the shore of Medina. Houses and whitewashed cottages were visible at Ryde, even the sails of a mill could be seen turning on the summit of Fairy Hill. Looking at the masts of transports, East Indiamen, bombships and cutters lying in St. Helen's roads aroused in Emily the exaltation that transported her when Captain Willett Payne described Lord Howe's defence of Sandy Hook. The British Fleet represented

glamour, honour, glory—a trinity linked in an indefinable way with Emy Lyon, who had no claim to virtue.

Identifying herself with every cause that stirred her imagination, she embarked upon imaginary adventures in naval battles. As captain of a first rate she saved the fleet from destruction. On an even more wonderful occasion, as an admiral's wife, she took command of a frigate, after all the officers were killed, and fought two French 74's until they struck—an exploit that made Emy Lyon the heroine of the British Navy and the Duchess of Hawarden. She enacted this gallant engagement with variations; sometimes the reward was not a coronet, but a sculptured tomb. Whether the finale was at St. James's Palace, or in Westminster Abbey, the King and Queen, with their numerous progeny, were in the foreground, huzzahing at an investiture, weeping at a requiem. In either event Emily triumphed and held the stage.

The attic was extremely cold, but she kept warm because battles called for dramatic gestures and rapid pacing up and down; until darkness recalled her to reality she was oblivious of time and hunger. Stumbling down the cockle-stair, she reached her bedroom to discover it chilly as the attic, whereupon she posted to the dark and deserted ground floor. She felt her way to the damp underground passage, angrily shouting at the top of her voice, giving tongue to a flow of invective not commonly to be heard from a lady. A glimmer from a stump of tallow candle preceded a startled page. Emily so far forgot herself as to box his ears.

"Little varmet, how dare you leave me with neither fire nor light?"

"How could we know you'd want either? Second footman said you'd gone off with one of the gentlemen."

"You're paid to work, not to think. If I have any more insolence Sir Harry'll dismiss the lot of you, so he will."

As a result of her outburst Emily was less neglected, but the demeanour of the servants remained the same. She was not the first wanton installed at Uppark; happen she wouldn't be the last. . . .

So long as the snow made a short bridge between the attic window and the men-of-war, Emily had access to a state where thought alone was paramount. She was what she wished to be. Unhappily a thaw set in on Friday night, and by the following morning all that remained of the magic scene were white islands in a dingy vista that extended to a foggy horizon. Inspiration and the convoy withdrew together.

By Sunday morning the landscape had resumed its muddy mid-

winter aspect, rendering it possible to execute Emily's long-cherished project to ride to West Dean Church, adjoining Sir James Peachy's embattled mansion. She felt a personal interest in Sir James because her mother, Mary Duggan, had attended his only daughter from the day she became the bride of the Right Honourable George Greville, Lord Brooke, until her death nine months later, after giving birth to an heir. It was due to Mrs. Duggan's skilful management that Sir James Peachy's grandson survived to be eight years old and the darling of his grandparents. Succeeding his father in 1773, George Greville, as Earl of Warwick, took for his second wife Henrietta, daughter of Richard Vernon and the Dowager-Countess of Upper Ossory; a marriage arranged in friendly settlement of a debt of £50,000 incurred by his Lordship to Mr. Vernon at Newmarket. In after years Mary Duggan was wont to say: "'Tis a pity the little Lord cannot live altogether at West Dean, because the Countess has no liking for a sickly lad who stands in the way of her own lusty sons."

Emily rode into the straggling hamlet as slow walkers were starting for church. Bating the mare at the inn, she gathered up her long blue velvet habit to cross a muddy lane to one even dirtier that led to West Dean Park. Curious and admiring glances followed her. Country air and an easy life had restored the beauty fever had impaired. Her cheeks were flushed, her blue eyes sparkled, the distracting charm of her bow-shaped mouth was enhanced by the vividness of her lips. Sun and wind had burnished her hair to tawny gold, her ringlets, still too short to dress in a modish manner, were tied with a black watered ribbon—a masculine style in attractive contrast with a long pink ostrich feather drooping against her curls.

Rounding a bend, she was confronted by the embattled flint walls and mullioned windows of West Dean, flanking a grave-yard and small church.

Emily's appearance shook the rustic congregation, and she had to wait in the aisle until the flustered sexton, recollecting his duties, conducted her to a seat adjoining Sir James Peachy's family pew. From the corner of her eye she saw that Lord Brooke was exactly as her mother described him: sensitive and nervous, with an expression of secret wisdom that made him look elf-shot.

Thanks to sound instruction received from Mrs. Thomas, chief chorister at Hawarden Church, Emily was able to join in all the hymns. At first she sang softly, but finding the choir slow and out of tune, she let her wonderful voice ring out. Villagers lagged and fell

silent; the fiddler who led a clarinet, a flageolet and a base viol, turned and played for Emily alone.

*"There is a land of pure delight,
Where Saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain."*

Transported by the rapture of her own voice, Emily felt herself singing to a multitude in a vast cathedral. All, all must hear the happy tidings. As the sexton struck the tuning-fork for the second verse she gathered herself together.

*"There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
That heavenly land from ours."*

Her rapt, upraised face had the spiritual beauty of a Madonna. Women sniffed and blew their noses; a young widow sobbed. Sir James watched Emily; his aristocratic, handsome face betrayed amazement. Forgetful of good behaviour, little Lord Brooke hung over the separating barrier.

The church was hushed when the hymn ended. Sinking to her knees, Emily propped her elbows on the prayer-rail and leant her chin upon interlocked fingers. Her large, soulful eyes were fixed upon the altar cross; from her tilted head vivid curls flowed back in a glowing cascade.

The shrivelled old parson, too stunned immediately to proceed with the service, presently so far recovered as to mumble prayers for the King's Majesty, for Queen Charlotte and for George-Augustus-Frederic, Prince of Wales—a ritual that put him into sufficiently good fettle to embark upon a long erudite sermon which nearly effaced the impression made by Emily's voice.

Prestige was recovered when the orchestra played the first bars of the last hymn and she was left to sing it alone. The tune was a particular favorite of Emily's, and the words also pleased because of their suitability for dramatic inflection.

*"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."*

Eschewing the chastened style proper for *chorale*, Emily sang with the verve of a *prima donna*. Accustomed to support through any improvisation by the fine orchestra at The Temple of Health, she was unprepared to be forsaken by a clarinet, a flageolet and a base viol. But so it was. Only the fiddler frenziedly kept company to the end of the fourth verse.

Emily, the last to leave, was greatly surprised to find, not a deserted country lane, but the congregation waving and clapping as she appeared. Blushing delightedly, she kissed her hand and dropped a curtsy. On Sir James Peachy's approach from the churchyard, the little crowd respectfully withdrew.

"You have afforded much pleasure," he observed in deep, gloomy tones. "One is not often privileged to hear a voice of such range, power and sweetness."

Warmed by praise, Emily became incredibly lovely. Curtseying she answered: "Indeed, Sir, I'm a happy girl to have pleased you. 'Twas fortunate I knew the hymns of Doctor Watts, for the orchestra played but poorly and with little notion of time."

A spasm twisted the baronet's gravity. "You frightened the poor devils!" Conscious that he had unbent too far, he resumed a formal tone. "Take an old man's advice: curb extra-galant ambition till ye know how to use your voice. By careful training you might become a great singer; vocal cords may be irreparably ruined by abuse."

Joy faded from Emily's face. In a moment she became a vision of grief, a change that rendered her no less beautiful. Tears hung on her lashes, but she answered stoutly: "I'm used to singing with a large orchestra to assemblies of fine ladies and gentlemen who applaud and come again. I must know all about singing, or I shouldn't have been engaged."

Sir James looked affronted and spoke coldly: "Probably your employer thought more of his pocket than of your future. But I'm sorry I proffered my warning, as ye take it amiss, and I wish ye a good day!"

As he turned on his heel, Emily caught his sleeve. "Please don't think ill of me! Indeed I'm grateful, but I've no money for teachers, so must do the best I can!"

He stopped, partially mollified. "Ye are to be pitied, and the loss to music must be deplored. Perhaps Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh would assist? I believe ye are his—er—guest?"

Emily looked at him with wide, candid eyes. "Not his guest," she said.

Sir James, shocked into making a determined escape, muttered: "Exactly! exactly!" and beckoned to his grandson.

Lord Brooke had sidled up to Emily and was reaching up to kiss her. "You're like the picture of the angel in my mamma's Bible," he whispered.

"Pretty love," Emily responded and kissed him heartily.

With tears in her eyes she watched him limp after his grandfather. At the park gates he turned to wave his cap and throw a kiss.

The morrow being sunny and mild, Emily rode again, crossing Compton Down to West Marden and on to Stanstead Forest. Emerging into a muddy lane, she saw a yellow coach, with six bay horses, lurching up the hill from West Bourne. A Ducal coach being a rarity, she drew rein on the grass verge to watch it pass. A couple of running footmen, temporarily accommodated at the back, and the coachman enthroned on a fringed velvet hammer-cloth, wore blue liveries turned up with red. On either door was emblazoned a coat-of-arms and the motto: *Sola vertus invecta*. Behind the grand equipage was revealed the hobby groom from Uppark leading Sir Harry's bay horse. The groom had accompanied the party to Arundel Castle; Emily saw him with misgiving. Cantering after the coach, she overtook it and, peering through the window, discerned Sir Harry half reclining with his right foot bandaged and propped up on the opposite seat. Tapping on the glass with her whip, she pointed to the foot and acted an inquiry.

Startled, his pasty, puffy face looked back at her. "Gout," he mouthed.

Indicating by dumb show that she would go on and prepare his bed, Emily urged the mare to a gallop and left the coach rumbling far behind.

As usual, the mansion felt cheerless and cold; the Little Parlour fire had gone out, and one in the bedroom had not been lit. Emily pealed the bell till it tossed to incoherence before having recourse to her only effective instrument—her voice. Simultaneously the coach appeared at the end of the long, winding drive. Instantly all was confusion and bustle; servants ran hither and thither, hoping by activity to conceal short-comings.

Supported on the arm of his body-servant, Sir Harry swore as he shuffled across the outer hall. "My God! the place smells like a vault!

What have you damned rascals been doing, eh? One 'u'd say no fires had been lit for a week!"

Emily cried: "Neither have there! Save sometimes a handful of hot cinders in the Little Parlour and a few bits of coal for going to bed."

A housemaid, running upstairs with a red-hot salamander, left a trail of sparks in her wake. In the hall Sir Harry groaned as he settled himself on a "sedan-chair" formed by the locked hands of two footmen. Borne down by his considerable weight, the men edged crabwise to the stairs, then, lurching and nearly overbalancing, they raised him step by step.

It was Sir Harry's first attack of gout, and his sufferings were severe. An apothecary from Petersfield, a skinny old man in horn-rimmed black spectacles who rode a broken-winded nag bony as himself, shook his head and prescribed mercury pills and hot poultices made of barley meal mixed with powdered wormwood, henbane, mandrake root and saffron.

Emily, compassionate and imaginative, had a natural aptitude for nursing. Hour after hour she patiently applied fresh poultices to Sir Harry's red and swollen foot. She burnt her face boiling skillets on an open fire, and refrained from grumbling when he roused her at night to re-soak flannel bandages in salt and cold water.

The middle of January brought a recurrence of bad weather; for thirty hours every view was obscured by whirling snow. Awaking one morning, Emily looked out upon a dazzling landscape of ridges and valleys. Drifts, resembling great combers, had been arrested by the house, the topmost branches of young fir trees merged like small bushes, the shrubbery and fencing were smoothed from sight.

Uppark was isolated: when fresh provisions were exhausted the household subsisted on bread, ham and cheese. Cut off from the purveyor of mercury pills, Sir Harry had recourse to James's Powders and felt much better. Acute depression followed the abatement of his symptoms; the quiet house and the padded silence without proved insupportable to his gregarious temperament.

"When roads are passable we'll move to London," he announced: "the country in winter is only fit *pour un imbécile*. In town, whatever the weather, a man can amuse himself."

"Where shall we stay?"

Sir Harry looked confounded. "Tell ye the truth, I don't know. I always put up at 'Limmer's' myself, but 'tis no place for a lady, even

of your sort, my dear." A quick gesture arrested her angry retort. "Now don't 'e take that amiss—you're a kind and beautiful creature, though not exactly a *grande dame*. How'd you like a little place of your own?"

"A house in London where I could do as I pleased?"

"Within limits, *ma chère*. If I set you up, 'twill be your duty to study me exclusively. Should I catch you throwing languishing glances elsewhere, out you'll go *sur le champ*!"

Emily found his autocratic proviso difficult to tolerate, but she was sufficiently enchanted by the proposal to curb her tongue.

"What part of London would you choose?" she inquired.

"Over that we must be careful. A discreet *maison meublée* in the Parisian style increases a man's prestige. But the house must be in the right quarter, 'faith it must."

"Would the streets round Covent Garden be suitable?"

"Not so *tonish* as the neighbourhood of St. James's, but 'tis an area frequented by men of fashion, and commends itself to my purse."

Emily waited eagerly for the snow to melt, but drifts were so deep that ten days elapsed before the coachman pronounced the roads fit for travel.

They set forth in Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh's antiquated family coach, the most roomy and comfortable vehicle for an invalid's accommodation. Sir Harry was still unable to wear an ordinary shoe, and his swaddled foot was encased in a shapeless boot of brown canvas laced up the front. Propped with pillows, the sufferer lay across the carriage, leaving the other half clear for Emily and multitudinous packages.

On reaching London they separated, Sir Harry going to his usual quarters at 'Limmer's', Emily to Low's "family" hotel in Covent Garden. It was to be her task to find a suitable habitation, a quest rendered unnecessary due to a lucky encounter between the baronet and an acquaintance who had for disposal an elegant two-pair-of-stairs house in Hart Street. Young Mr. Entwistle, a gentleman of limited fortune, had equipped No. 7 in sumptuous style for charming Fräulein Schwach, a companion acquired during a *séjour* in Munich. After two years of bliss Mr. Entwistle faced the horrid necessity of breaking up his establishment to marry money. Furnishings, sufficiently fresh to accoutre a new era of love, were going at a bargain. As Sir Harry remarked in a note to Emily: "A little tarnish is un-

important, as we are not preparing a setting for *une lune de miel*. To-morrow I shall call for you in a hackney-coach and we will inspect *notre maison d'amour*."

The *bullet-doux* reached Emily as she enjoyed a leisurely breakfast at her bedroom window overlooking the market. The chief business of the day was over, but the square was still a lively spectacle. Housewives and *chefs* jostled round the stalls within the railed inclosure; porters, crowned with erections of baskets, trotted nimbly from rigid torsos; bundled-up old women crouching on the black marble steps of the Corinthian sun-dial, roasted chestnuts and potatoes at primitive braziers. Under the sheltering arcades rival vendors extolled the merits of "Cuckold's Comfort", "The Ladies' Delight", "Tow Row", "Sangree", and "King Theodore of Corsica", while one, disdaining subterfuge, bellowed: "Hot gin! Hot gin! Warm yer gurs with hot gin!"

Emily's wandering eyes were arrested by a familiar figure: Mrs. Montizambia with Roscius preening himself on her shoulder. Framed by a calash, her hair, freshly dressed and powdered, formed a vast edifice to accommodate a glass pineapple and a bunch of grapes, out-rivalling any fruit on sale in the market. A gown of rich red velvet and an ermine muff and tippet completed a gorgeous *ensemble*. Mrs. Montizambia's lonely, garish figure smote Emily reproachfully. Moving from the window, she tried to escape the reminder of her own ingratitude.

Soon after noon Sir Harry's hackney-coach rattled into the square. He had made a detour through Park Street in order to consult Dr. Lucas Pepys, who advised taking the waters at Bath.

"Not that I shall act on his opinion unless I get another attack. At the 'Cocoa Tree' this morning I met Colonel Mordaunt, who told me he always dispels the gout by drinking Seltzer and Pyrmont water. He's taking with him to the East Indies an apparatus for making both." Sir Harry wore a complacent expression as he continued: "Colonel Mordaunt made an offer to include a couple of my cocks among the birds he is transporting. Cocking is a sport in high favour with the black nabobs, and he expects the stakes will amount to five thousand the main and a thousand guineas each match!"

"Perhaps the poor birds will die on the way," Emily hopefully rejoined.

"*A Dieu ne plaise!* Mordaunt's taking out our best English *coqs de combat!*"

Emily was saved an answer by the hackney-coach drawing up at the door of their prospective abode, a modest, flat-fronted dwelling differing little from its neighbours. A narrow railed area and three stone steps at one side led to a front door decorated with a neat stucco fronton.

After helping Sir Harry to alight, Emily mounted the steps and pulled the bell. A long interval elapsed before high heels tapped along the passage. Fraulein Schwach herself opened the door, and received them with a curtsy. She was a fair, plump, dimpling little woman who looked scarcely older than twenty. Beholding Emily, she clapped her hands and cried: "Such beauty hurts the eyes. When the *lieber Gott* made you, 'tis certain He intended to fashion an angel."

Emily never felt embarrassed by admiration, and accepted it with smiling acquiescence devoid of conceit. As for Sir Harry, he regarded praise of his mistress as a eulogy of himself, thus the business meeting started auspiciously.

Fraulein Schwach's hoop filled the narrow passage as she preceded them to the parlour. In the small white-panelled room Mr. Entwistle nervously stood with his back to the fire. He was a dark, lank young man who had an Adam's apple that moved up and down like a piston. At sight of her lover, Fraulein Schwach, who had seemed quite cheerful in the passage, brought out a lace handkerchief and carefully dabbed her eyes.

With a damp, flabby hand Mr. Entwistle raised Emily from her curtsy.

"Wilhelmine is all nature," he announced in a deep voice that had a sepulchral vibration as if it came from a well. "I tell her to be courageous, recollecting that my lot is worse than hers." From his pocket he produced a miniature in a small leather case which he opened and presented to Sir Harry. "My intended," he dolorously stated.

"My God!" exclaimed the baronet in tones of commiseration.

"Quite so, quite so." Mr. Entwistle's hand rasped his beard as miserably he rubbed his thin jaws.

The parting lovers affected such nice behaviour that Emily alone was invited to inspect the bedrooms. She found them small and much cumbered with silk hangings, ormolu brackets, Dresden clocks and candelabra. Carpets were in the French style, valanced dressing-tables resembled hooped petticoats, and no piece of furniture appeared designed to serve any useful purpose. Determined to have the house,

Emily expressed admiration for all she saw and sympathy with Fräulein Schwach, who had to relinquish such grandeur. Great was her surprise when her hostess administered a vicious kick to a gilded foot-stool and began gaily to dance up and down, her skirts wildly swinging above twinkling feet.

"In the spring I'll be the bride of Franz with a dowry of one thousand ducats," she warbled.

"Does Mr. Entwistle know you're going to be wed?" Emily inquired.

"*Nein, nein*; he believes I shall weep for him and live solitary on my thousand ducats until I die of grief. Are not these gentlemen foolish?" Tilting her head to one side, she looked shrewdly at Emily. "Sir Harry is richer than Mr. Entwistle. He can give more than one thousand ducats; how much have you gotten?"

"Nothing," Emily answered indignantly. "He gives me a few pounds now and then, and I spend them. Ashamed I should be to hoard what's meant for use."

"*Ach, mein herz*, you'll die a beggar!"

Returning to the parlour, Fräulein Schwach dispensed cream cakes and capillaire while the transference of the lease was discussed. It was arranged that Sir Harry should take possession on Saturday, which would allow the sprightly Wilhelmine three days to pack. Parting on the best of terms, Mr. Entwistle promised to visit No. 7 when his honeymoon was over. "Twill be a comfort," he said, "to have friends to whom I can talk of my dear, dear Wilhelmine."

In the hackney-coach Emily and her protector argued over the question of service; Sir Harry wished to bring two women servants from Uppark, while Emily was determined to have one domestic of her own choosing. As the matter was still unsettled when they reached Low's Hotel, Emily took Sir Harry up to her bedroom.

"If ye get a London wench she'll rob us!"

"I know one who would not, and 'twould be a pleasure to bring her from the damp cellar where she works and sleeps."

"Upon my soul, Emily, I believe you take me for an *institut bien-faisant*! I'm not a philanthropist; I want a good *cuisinière* and *femme de chambre*."

"Mary Mudge is both and much besides."

A twinge shooting from Sir Harry's big toe caused him to flinch.

"Damn ye, Emily, have it your own way; but if I find my dinner's spoil'd, ye shall know it!"

After he had gone Emily changed the guinea he had given and walked across to the coach-stand on the south side of Covent Garden. She was obliged to engage a rickety old vehicle modernized by a couple of glazed windows, the other apertures being still fitted with antiquated iron shutters that rattled deafeningly as the wheels trundled over the kidney stones.

In Fleet Street gutted houses and blackened walls recalled to Emily the culminating night of the riots when the roar of flames from Mr. Langdale's distillery at Holborn Bridge could be heard at Furnival's Inn.

At Fleet Bridge her coach was held up by a fallen horse attached to a waggon loaded with burnt bricks from the prison. To avoid watching the horse, Emily took stock of her surroundings. A breach in the prison wall and iron *cheval-de-frise* revealed a courtyard and the impregnable façade of a gutted building. Squads of workmen mixed mortar and carried hods of new bricks through the gaping stone doorway. Between the ruined skittle-ground and the shell of the warden's lodge paced a couple of turnkeys approvingly watching the rebuilding.

If the old régime was to be restored at the Fleet Prison, it was already re-established at the Bridewell. When Emily was able to proceed past the wrought-iron gates of the old palace, her ears were assailed by a familiar thud of wooden mallets beating hemp.

Chatham Place wore its customary aspect. The toll-house on Blackfriars Bridge was rebuilt and the gates restored. A new set of curtains distinguished Mrs. Budd's windows, a circumstance that emphasized the decay discernible in Mrs. Tarraway's establishment. A broken window in Dr. Graham's room was repaired with gummed paper; the bell-pull, having become detached at the junction, lay with its handle on the step, frustrating Emily's intention of announcing her presence at the front door. Dismissing the hackney-coach, she made an inconspicuous entry by way of the area steps.

Mary Mudge had her back to the door and was engaged in mangling bed-linen. The mangle, a wooden box eight feet by three filled with heavy stones, moved backwards and forwards over two rollers encircled by the articles to be glossed. The box, weighing half a ton, was dragged by a chain set in motion by an iron wheel; the whole contrivance, supported on a stout wooden base, resembled in its entirety one of the instruments of torture in the Press-Yard at the Old Bailey. Ballast, rattling as the box trundled back and forth, drowned Emily's

voice, and she had to tweek her friend's sleeve. Cowering apprehensively, Mary swung round. Immediately her pinched, sallow face became illuminated.

"Oh, Emy! Emy! I didn't expect to clap eyes on you again, and here you are looking more like a lady than ever! 'Tis strange how some folks go up and others down." Her tone was slightly acid as she sized up the price of Emily's velvet dress.

"You're going up too, Mary. I came to tell you."

"I could do with a bit of fortune. Everything's acted contrary since we buried father. Did you know he'd gone at last? He's got a proper good place in the sunflower patch beside Joe Miller's grave."

In a flash Emily visualized the Green Ground as she had so often seen it from her bedroom window. Hurriedly she changed the subject: "Is your sweetheart well?"

"Oh, Ephraim's all right; there's nothing amiss with *him*," Mary responded with gloomy emphasis.

Emily waited.

Presently her friend proceeded in a sulky monotone: "D'you remember the old Charlie who had his box nigh the round-house? About November he died and we got another watchman, a nasty prying fellow with a wall eye. Seeing how things were, Tom should have stumped up the cole, but Tom didn't, and before you could say Dick Turpin, he was in front of the constable charged with being a resurrection man. The constable brought him before the Trading Justice, who wouldn't give him his discharge under a five-pound fine. You'd think such expensive punishment 'ud satisfy a bishop, wouldn't you? But not Ephraim." Pausing, Mary scathingly repeated: "No, *not* Ephraim."

"What did he do?"

"Called my family rogues; said I could take my choice, him or them."

Emily looked archly over the top of her muff. "Sure, 'tis difficult to guess how you'd answer."

"I stuck out, but he wore me down, and I sacrificed mother and Tom. Even that wasn't enough. Now Ephraim grumbles because I'm not dressed fine for courting. How can I buy clothes when I've had no wages these six months?"

"Mrs. Tarroway doing badly?"

"Mortal. The only lodger is a poor clergyman in the two pair

back. It got too uncomfortable for Dr. Graham—he's moved to St. Martin's Lane."

"I always thought 'twas strange he lived so far from the Adelphi. As things are going so ill, you'll be glad to join me. From the end of the week I shall have a neat house in Hart Street with a pretty garden behind. If you'll do the work and cooking, the wages will be seven pounds a year."

Mary sharply drew her breath. "'Tis handsome pay." Despite this acknowledgement she appeared reluctant. Leaning on the mangle, she traced with her forefinger the embossed royal arms and the words: "Beethem, London. Patentee." Eventually she said: "Would the two of us be living alone?"

"How could I have money to rent a house in Hart Street? Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh will be there when he wants my company, but with all the attractions of the town to lure him, 'tis likely we'll be much by ourselves."

Mary's uneasy finger continued its tracing. "When I inquired for you at Mrs. Montizambia's, she said you'd gone to be a baronet's kept girl."

"She couldn't know," Emily indignantly retorted.

"Maria Macklin saw you leave, and she knew his name."

"'Twas unkind of her to tell, but no matter—we can be nearly as comfortable with Sir Harry as without him. In this world one can't expect to have everything just as one wishes." Emily accompanied her philosophical remark by coaxingly putting her arm around her friend's shoulders.

"I've always kept myself respectable," Mary demurred.

"You needn't change your ways. We'll have nice times together, and there'll be many gowns to spare that will pleasure Ephraim."

"Maybe he'll forbay me to serve an unvirtuous dwelling."

"Should he be so foolish, I'll talk to him in my own way. Ephraim liked me well."

Mary answered sharply: "I haven't forgotten!"

She took long in giving a favourable answer, but, once persuaded, grew enthusiastic. "I believe I could roast and broil with the best if I was mastering good victuals."

Momentarily Emily was beset by misgiving. "I'll buy a copy of Mrs. Glasse," she said with doubt-dispelling firmness.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

EMILY chose a fine morning to waylay Maria Macklin in St. Paul's churchyard. Maria's health had sadly deteriorated; she could limp only with the aid of crutches; as a compensation her moral standard had been strengthened by the Reverend James Tattersall.

Sitting on Samuel Butler's tomb, she gently rejected Emily's cordial overtures. "You're living in sin."

"Oh, I'm not," Emily indignantly answered—"I'm acting identical with hundreds of respectable girls."

"But you've not been wedded in church."

"That's not my fault!" Interpreting Maria's silence as dismissal, Emily started to walk away, then turned to see if her friend relented. "Won't you meet me here again?"

"At my funeral!"

Smarting from the repulse, Emily was solaced by the greater toleration of Maria's father. This was fortunate, as they often sat together in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, whither Emily went at the invitation of Jane Farmer. Emanating an aroma of gin from his morning massage, the octogenarian actor filled the intervals by recounting anecdotes and old triumphs, reminiscences so sympathetically received that she was promised a box at the Haymarket Theatre when Charles Macklin acted Sir Pertinax Macsycophant in his own play: *The Man of the World*.

Quickly the days slid by, forming a pleasant pattern that in retrospect lacked shape and colour only because time had been dedicated to no definite purpose. Emily again enjoyed social success, Sir Harry's friends having reverted to their old gallantry. When they came to Hart Street after carousals at Brooks's or 'The Cocoa Tree,' she was as popular as before the cocking. She struck up a friendship with the Earl of Surrey, whose drunken habits, dirty clothes, and distaste for soap and water were compensated by rugged kindness and rude

wit. In the previous June he and his friend Sir Thomas Gascoigne had "Abjured the errors of the Church of Rome" before the Archbishop of Canterbury and received the Sacrament—a renunciation that entitled them to pronounce the Parliamentary oaths.

"I'd have ye remember, m'dear," he said to Emily, "that telling a lie to a Protestant is only a white lie, and the heir of all the blood of all the Howards is just as good a Catholic as before he swallowed the Protestant Sacrament."

Indifferent to the ethics of religious perjury, Emily was ready to share in benefits accruing. As a Member of Parliament, the Earl of Surrey was privileged to send free ten letters a day to any part of the United Kingdom. There being no proviso that letters must personally be written, a Member was able to oblige his friends. Emily thus became the happy possessor of a dozen franks, addressed to herself and her friends by the accommodating nobleman, and immediately set about writing to her family. Following the custom of poor people who could neither read nor pay postage dues, she occasionally dispatched to her mother and grandmother addressed and wafered sheets of plain paper to indicate that she was well. By leaving Dr. Budd's employ she had, to the detriment of her peace of mind, cut herself off from return communications.

An unorthodox speller but a fluent scribe, Emily's compositions recorded the friendly volubility of her tongue, only the difficulty of accounting for her circumstances arrested her pen. "Twould break her gammer's heart if she guessed about Sir Harry. . . .

Baffled by the problem, Emily wrote boastfully to her aunt, Sarah Connor, of vocal triumphs at the assemblies of a great London physician. "Mind you," she scribbled, "Doctor G. is one as all the nobility is after to cure them of akes and pains and I sang to them till their heads was turned."

Emily also wrote to Mrs. Thomas, her late employer at Hawarden, and to her favourite aunt, Ann Reynolds; to each she described herself as a singer employed to entertain aristocratic invalids. Repetition having converted a plan into a fact she composed letters to her mother and grandmother on the same formula; in both she inclosed franks addressed by the Earl of Surrey to herself. The day's correspondence left her with five franks for future use.

In writing thus Emily anticipated an ambition that only waited opportunity for its accomplishment. Reinstatement as "Hygeia" at the Temple of Health would mean applause, pocket money and an

outlet for energy. All depended on the way the idea was presented to Sir Harry. . . . 'Twas his nature to esteem a mistress publicly discussed rather than one who was obscure, if devoted. . . .

On St. Valentine's Day Sir Harry again became incommoded by the gout, a misfortune Emily utilized to introduce Dr. Graham's name in a natural manner.

"But last time," the sufferer protested, "I consulted Dr. Lucas Pepys."

"And what good did he do? Seeing you've got gout again within a month!"

"I've been living pretty free." Pride and pain intermingled in the accompanying groan.

"Some of Dr. Graham's patients looked pickled in sin, yet he keeps them active and zestful."

"Then send for him."

"Dr. Graham's too great for that; unless you're bedridden you must go to the Temple of Health."

"*Bon Dieu!* One 'ud suppose apothecaries were men of quality by their high behaviour." Sir Harry pealed the bell and ordered Mary Mudge to fetch a hackney-coach.

Emily accompanied him to the Adelphi, and when a gigantic footman demanded an appointment card, she pushed past and ran along the narrow passage to the recessed staircase. The "junior priest", rolling pills in the lower basement, looked paler and more jaded than when she had left him.

"Emily!" he cried on a note of delight.

She laid her finger against rosy lips. "Come quickly to an important patient. That great bumpkin upstairs will upset all my plans, for I tell you Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh's not the man to be treated how you please."

Looking crestfallen, Dr. Mitford did as he was bid. Standing at the bottom of the stair-well, Emily watched him bounding up succeeding flights. Not desirous of appearing a conspirator, she followed slowly, and emerged as the junior priest helped Sir Harry from the coach. The long passage had a groined roof and duplicated ornate fanlights; from Emily's position it resembled a telescope with Sir Harry and the sunlit terrace objects under scrutiny.

"Naturally, naturally," Dr. Mitford soothingly murmured; "a consultation can be arranged immediately!"

Sir Harry and Emily waited in the ground-floor reception-room,

amid surgical souvenirs discarded by grateful patients, while the young physician passed through a small closet to Dr. Graham's cabinet. Outside the windows gigantic footmen paced the terrace; both were strangers to Emily, but she recognized on a livery coat a tear she had darned for a former lackey whose sleeve caught in the mechanism of the Celestial Bed.

When Sir Harry was summoned to the consultation, Emily accompanied Dr. Mitford to see the fresco of Hygeia receiving the sick and lame at the Temple of Health. The painting faced the staircase recess and covered the wall between the Great Apollo Apartment and the first-floor back drawing-room. Mr. George Romney had been commissioned to execute the work, and he stood on a ladder putting finishing touches to the back-ground. The artist and Emily met like old friends; in an eager descent to greet her, he dropped most of his brushes.

Emily gazed with wrapt admiration at the fresco. "Indeed, 'tis a most beautiful painting—like a bible scene come true."

"Had you been my model, 'twould look Elysian. Were you ever painted?"

"Only by Mrs. Thomas, sister of Mr. Joseph Boydell, the engraver. 'Twas but a poor sketch done when my hair was a-drying, and she gave me so long a nose I was like a ferret."

"I would paint you as a goddess."

"Should I be lovely as Hygeia up there?"

The artist's serious brown eyes scanned Emily's face as he solemnly answered: "Much more lovely."

A sojourn in Rome and long residence in London had not robbed George Romney of his Lancashire accent. Both he and Emily used the short "a" of the northern counties, and a stranger, unused to nice differences of accent, would assume they were bred in the same locality. Emily, who could discriminate, knew he came of stock humble as her own, and the fact made them akin. The artist was forty-six, but appeared less, as his quick movements and vital air were those of youth. His face was gentle in repose, but could dramatically express every mood and emotion. Brown-haired, of middle height and compactly built, the whole force of his personality was revealed in his intent wide eyes.

Dr. Mitford, finding himself ignored, descended in a huff to the basement. Stooping, Mr. Romney picked up his scattered brushes,

remounted the ladder and perched himself on the top; Emily took a seat on the ascending stairs, facing the fresco.

"I've heard of you; who has not, indeed? But I thought you was Sir Joshua Reynolds's rival as a portrait-painter."

"Some say so, but he had ten years' start of me, and sometimes I wonder if I've ever caught up. If a living were to be made out of fancy pictures I'd never paint another portrait. Even as it is, when every man and woman with a few guineas is anxious to spend them on a likeness ugly as themselves, I'm haunted by the fear that business will be insufficient to support me."

"Now, how strange that is, a great genius like you, doubting about the future, whereas I, who have no reason to think myself uncommon, always feel sure of splendid prospects."

Looking down from his elevated perch the artist whimsically quoted:—

*"O lovely bias of the female soul!
Which trembling points to pleasure's distant pole;
Which with fond trust on flattering hope relies,
O'erleaps each peril, that in prospect lies,
And springing to the goal, anticipates the prize!"*

When he paused, Emily clapped her hands and cried: "There now, that's just how I feel, though I can't put the thoughts so very neat."

Raising an admonishing finger, Mr. Romney continued in a warning tone:—

*"Such was SERENA'S fear-discarding state;
Her eye beheld not the dark frowns of fate;
She only saw, the combat all forgot,
The triumph promis'd as her glorious lot."*

"I like the first verse better than the second, but the whole is as pretty a thing as could be, and I wish I knew the author to tell him so."

"My good friend Mr. William Hayley wrote the poem, and named it *The Triumphs of Temper*. When you sit for me, as I hope you will, 'twill be my pleasure to bring you together."

"Oh, it must be," said Emily, clasping her hands. "Sir Harry has little occasion for art, but I'll talk him round somehow."

"Sir Harry?" Mr. Romney repeated the name on a questioning note.

"Of Uppark in Sussex. I live with him as his wife," Emily hung her head and plucked at her dress, adding: "but I'm not his wife."

Mr. Romney moved uneasily, making the ladder creak. Glancing up, Emily saw that his face was red and embarrassed. Presently he acknowledged her candour with reciprocal frankness. "In the eyes of the Church I'm a husband, but I've not seen my wife these twenty years. A good, kind woman she is, but an artist can't be fettered by marriage, which she understood when I explained to her."

"Does your wife love you?" Emily inquired.

"Yes; that's why she allowed me to go!" Mr. Romney had twisted round in order to improve the foliage of an allegorical tree growing over the Temple of Health. Emily saw only his queue, a white painting-smock, and a brown-stockinged leg and black, buckled shoe, flexed in a contorted attitude round the ladder-strut.

The sympathetic silence that supervened was shattered by the sound of footsteps below. "*Grand merci!* I never imagined a *goutte vague* would yield so quickly," Sir Harry's voice announced.

"Seated on my magnetico-electrical throne you were in direct contact with the celestial fire and vivifying influences produced by the great cylinder, and conducted by massy glass tubes through the partition wall. But I cannot yet pronounce a cure, greatly as you have benefited by my apparatus. That would entail at least seven treatments."

"I'll take 'em! I'll take 'em!"

"Two guineas each treatment, or twelve guineas for a course of seven, paid in advance. The junior priest will supply a printed receipt."

While they conferred Dr. Graham and his patient slowly ascended to the first floor, and Emily, peering through the wrought-iron banisters, saw the bargain concluded on the bend of the stairs.

Observing Emily, Sir Harry climbed the last flight and chucked her under the chin. "*Je vous remercie!*" 'Tis the first time I have felt the thing this year. Dr. Graham says I am suffering from an unformed gout, the most disagreeable sensation that a man can have, and a real fit would be far preferable. Now, the other physician I consulted never told me *that!*"

"Faith, my dear Sir, no other physician in the town possesses my knowledge, nor my apparatus, which is the outcome of long and intense study."

"*Vraiment! Vraiment!*" Sir Harry hastily rejoined.

Dr. Graham made the baronet and the artist known to each other, an introduction neither seemed to appreciate. Mr. Romney continued to paint in a more hunched attitude than before, only his brown-garbed legs and posterior were visible to persons below. Sir Harry, who bracketed artists and flunkys together, ignored the fresco and its painter. While disapproving of creative effort, he admired mirrors and gilded rococo. The Great Apollo Apartment received his warmest praise. "What I'd like to see is *Le lit celeste*. Not," he added jocosely, "that I'm thinking of spending a night in it. When I'm ready to have an heir, I hope to get My Lady that way without disbursing fifty guineas on paraphernalia."

Dr. Graham conducted his patient up to the second storey, and Mr. Romney descended from his ladder. Standing before Emily, he looked at her compassionately, then, raising her hand to his lips, kissed it. "You have my pity," he said.

Sir Harry came down so impressed by the electrical machines and edified by the doctor's attentions that he accepted an invitation to the next Thursday night Assembly.

When the evening arrived, instead of arraying herself in a fashionable sacque and full dress cap, Emily dressed in a white gown *à la Grecque* and bound her curls with silver ribbon. In order that the unorthodox costume might pass unchallenged, she encouraged Sir Harry to dine with Mr. Winstanley, who had come up from his seat in Leicestershire to stay at the 'Hummmums'. As a further precaution she engaged a couple of chairs in lieu of the hackney-coach preferred by her protector.

They arrived late at Adelphi Terrace, and Dr. Graham had started his lecture: "On the Soul". The only illumination came from a seven-branched candelabrum behind his head, a light sufficient to reveal his thick-set, vigorous figure, square-visaged, handsome head, and shapely hands dramatizing his subject. It also betrayed empty seats and a less *tonish* audience than formerly, interspersed here and there with familiar faces. On Assembly nights lectures were shorter and based on a philanthropic-scientific pattern less interesting than those dealing with the repair of a degenerating race. Music, tea, coffee, capillaire and orgeat provided the main attraction, coupled with the possibility of gratis advice if the doctor could be inveigled into hearing whispered confidences.

Immediately the lecture ended, candles were lit in the chandelier and Emily was recognized. Old admirers clapped enthusiastically, a

lead followed by new comers who did not wish to betray themselves strangers.

"Why this *salve d'applaudissements?*" Sir Harry inquired.

"They think I'm going to sing," Emily complacently rejoined.

"*C'est extraordinaire!* You might be a *prima-donna!*"

Emily, who had clung to her cloak, now discarded it. Sir Harry regarded with dismay her clinging draperies. "Upon my soul, you're hardly decent! Wrap yourself up again, do!"

Ignoring his protest, Emily rose and graciously bowed to the company, which evoked further applause and shouts for a song. The orchestra, striking up an air from *Le Stravaganze del Conte*, drowned the clamour and secured privacy for Dr. Graham's hurried interrogation: "Will you oblige us?"

"Indeed, 'twould make me happy. Shall I sing the recitative beginning 'Hail! thou blest Genius'?"

Sir Harry muttered: "Faith, Emily, you mustn't make an exhibition of yourself. 'Tis *tonish* to sing in private, but ye can't perform in public."

Emily was already walking with Dr. Graham towards the dais. Instead of the gilded frame that formerly enshrined her, she stood against a background of mirrors which distractingly reflected the audience. The orchestral introduction was long and gave her time to question the wisdom of an unrehearsed performance; as confidence flagged, her glance fell upon Sir Harry's angry face. His expression acted as a spur. Strong and clear her lovely voice rang across the room:—

"Hail! thou blest Genius of the Healing Art!
 Thou sweet companion of the troubled heart:
 At thy approach Disease, confounded, flies,
 And pale Disorder hides her hollow eyes.
 Thanks to the potent-all-governing hand,
 That led thee safe to this afflicted land,
 Exult, Ye lame! Ye sick! Ye deaf! Ye blind!"

There were four stanzas redounding to the doctor's fame, and Emily's rendering brought tears to many eyes. Applause was loud and protracted. "*Bis! Bis!*" shouted Sir Harry; "*Bravo!*" said Dr. Graham as he helped her from the platform.

Lectures and all entertainments at the Temple of Health terminated promptly at ten o'clock, a rule enforced by a footman beating

a gong outside the Great Apollo Apartment. As the guests trooped towards the stairs, Dr. Graham detained Sir Harry.

"A grateful patient—Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire—has sent me a dozen maraschino veritable of Zara; I should be honoured by your verdict on't."

Sir Harry found the maraschino so palatable that he drank a whole bottle, and his good opinion of the doctor increased. Learning that his host had practised in Paris, he became communicative and recounted frolics of a tender nature. "Upon my word, I'm almost ashamed of some of my mad *amours à Paris*. 'Faith I am!"

The mellowing effect of the delicate spirit having rendered Sir Harry benevolently disposed, he raised only slight objections to Emily resuming the rôle of "Hygeia".

"'Tis a very eligible situation, that I agree at once, but I can't commit myself to saying she can come regularly. That wouldn't do at all, 'faith it wouldn't!"

Emily judged it wise to intervene. "In the evenings you are out with your friends, so 'twould make no difference if I came here to sing, and, as we live near, I should be home soon after ten."

Sir Harry regarded her with fuddled suspicion. "See here, now, that won't do at all, dammit, no! I'm not spending all my time in London. I've got a place in the country, and I can't keep it eating its head off and get no benefit. No, no, that wouldn't do at all. Likewise I don't keep a mistress eating *her* head off and get no benefit. But when I'm in town I don't object to your singing as ye did this night." Raising his forefinger he wagged it portentously at Emily. "Mind! ye must get something for it. The labourer is worthy of his hire, 'faith he is!"

Dr. Graham, whose glass was untouched, leant forward to replenish Sir Harry's. "'Twas my intention to offer Mistress Lyon five shillings for each appearance. Naturally my claim would not preclude holidays or bind her in any unreasonable manner."

"I'll drink to that, if I die for it, yet I've done pretty well already. 'Hygeia' and the Temple of Health, hip-hip-huzzah!" cried Sir Harry.

Under the new arrangement, Emily was better off than she had ever been—often she had as much as thirty shillings a week to spend, but by pay-day her pockets were empty. She bought Mary Mudge a new outfit of clothes, and by saving for a fortnight, sent the proceeds to her grandmother at Hawarden. While deriving considerable pleas-

ure from giving, she was not as happy as she had expected to be. Since he had become interested in his health, Sir Harry was additionally tedious as a companion. Under a régime prescribed by Dr. Graham he had two baths a day, one hot and the other cold, he slept with the bedroom window open, but, pinning his faith upon electricity as a miraculous antidote, he defied advice by drinking freely as hitherto. The 'Cocoa Tree,' Brooks's and Arthur's knew him still, his habits only deviated when he and his friends attended a lecture at the Temple of Health, and afterwards, in a procession of sedan-chairs, escorted Emily back to Hart Street.

On Assembly nights, when the doctor's discourses were not salacious, Sir Harry and his companions eschewed the Great Apollo Apartment and waited upon Adelphi Terrace. On such an evening in early March, Captain Willett Payne reappeared. Emerging into the flickering torchlight, Emily saw him conversing within the semicircle of waiting chairs. Undeterred by Sir Harry's scowls, he ran forward and gave her a warm embrace. "My pretty poppit, you're lovelier than ever. Had I remembered half your beauty I'd not have lingered so long in the country."

Sir Harry, towering above the small dark sailor, shouldered him roughly aside. "No poaching, now, no poaching!"

"Don't walk away with the anchor, Fetherstone. I found Emy first, and we agreed to share and share alike." Clapping the baronet heartily on the back, he added: "Gad, I'd doubt your delight at seeing me if I didn't know your good heart."

"Oh, I'm glad enough to see ye, Jack; but 'faith I'll tolerate no *braconnage*."

"Easy away there! Easy away!" Captain Payne soothingly responded.

The scene stamped itself upon Emily's memory and uprose in after years when more important impressions had faded. The moon, floating high in a luminous sky, revealed the flowing river, like plaited glass, and the dark line of the Surrey shore with here and there a church spire pointing to heaven. A pulsing red glow from fires burning outside the arches threw into relief the terrace railings and lamps glimmering on tall stanchions, while a brighter glare from torches cast upon the houses gigantic shadows of Sir Harry and his friends.

Due to his agility, Captain Payne succeeded in handing Emily into her sedan; he also contrived that his porters were first to get

away. On turning into Adam Street, dark save for a feeble bracket lamp, both chairs drew level. Letting down his window, the young sea officer beckoned Emily to do likewise.

"Well, my pretty, 'tis a sight for sore eyes to see ye looking fresh and dewy as a spring morning. And not because ye've been living the life of a Hackney Boarding-school miss, I'll warrant. You're like the angels, my pretty, who walk through mire without soiling their heavenly raiment."

Emily put out the tip of her rosy tongue as she poked her head round the corner. "You talk as foolish as before you sailed away."

On reaching Hart Street, it was not Emily's practice immediately to join Sir Harry and his friends; instead she repaired to the kitchen to share a hot supper with Mary Mudge. This she explained to Captain Payne as they approached the house. "Since I've been singing for Dr. Graham I've had to give up my dinner, so 'tis only right I should have something before going to bed."

"Then I'll join ye, Emy. Fetherstone and his cronies are half seas already; a little more and they'll be sleeping beneath the table. 'Twill be like old times for us. D'you remember the first night we spent together in that flashy bordel in St. James's?"

"Sure, I'll remember it to my dying day!"

Flattered by Emily's answer, Captain Payne gave her waist a hearty squeeze as he escorted her from the sedan-chair. Emily pealed the door-bell; before it was answered, the procession of link-boys and sedans converged upon the house. One by one chairs were set down, roofs were raised, doors opened. Gentlemen of varied ages and degrees of preservation stepped out upon the cobblestones. All save the Earl of Surrey were dressed in the high kick of fashion; none could boast a more elegant suit than Captain Payne's "Hanover green" satin, with its coat embroidered on fronts and seams. The sailor's opulent appearance astonished Emily, who recalled his former impecunious plight.

Surprise became amazement on the following morning, when he clattered into Hart Street driving a freakish vehicle called a high-flyer phaeton. Abandoning the washing of breakfast cups, she ran out with soapy arms to watch from the doorstep. Although the equipage was showy and a-glitter with new paint, Captain Payne's skill was no greater than when he drove a hired curricule. The handsome bay horses, foaming and wild-eyed, were nearly brought to their haunches by the sailor's mode of pulling up.

"The spice of a high-flyer is its danger," Captain Payne called from his perched-up seat. Beckoning a loiterer to mind the horses, he jumped down beside Emily. "Well, how are ye this sunny morning, my pretty? Our schemes came to naught last night; I've never known Fetherstone to be so unaccommodating. 'Tis clear you've hit his eye more than any wench, and no wonder. But we'll enjoy ourselves yet, sweet Emy. Ranelagh, Vauxhall, Bagnigge Wells—we'll visit 'em all, for I'm flush of money."

"Different from the summer when you'd hardly a sixpence to bless yourself with."

"I've had money from St. Kitts, where there's plenty to spare, only the devil 'tis to get it to England. By the last convoy my Uncle Tobias Gallwey sent an extra draft for five hundred pounds."

"No wonder you've got so grand. But where's your ship, that you're not at sea fighting the Frenchies?"

"I have no ship; only the Admiralty and the Navy Board know when and if I shall get another. The Portuguese Government accuse me of entering and detaining by force a number of Portuguese subjects last August when the *Artois* lay in the Tagus. I flatter myself I've proved the complaint unfounded, but the affair has lost me the command of the finest frigate afloat."

"'Tis a shame, but maybe you'll go back."

"No hope, my pretty. Captain McBride re-commissioned her in January."

"Then likely you never received a letter I wrote last Christmas, to be delivered by a midshipman named Cæsar Bacon?"

"I hauled down my pendant in November, and ye may be sure I dallied no longer in Chatham than the time it took to hire post-horses." Grinning mischievously, he gave her arm a coaxing squeeze. "What did ye say in the letter, Emy? Did ye say ye longed for my kisses?"

Recalling her words, Emily blushed and glanced towards Bow Street, where horses and phaeton were being turned about by their ragged guardian. Accepting silence as a flattering tribute, the sea officer gave his hat a jaunty tilt.

Emily looked above the house-tops at the pale blue sky and drifting clouds, and down again to the spanking bays drawing the curious vehicle. Unlike an ordinary phaeton, the high-flyer was of immense height, and, as the framework consisted of little more than a perch and a pair of axel-trees, was remarkably light. Its hind wheels were

eight feet in diameter, those in front three feet less. A seat for two, elevated over the forepart of the carriage, relied upon a "pump handle" and grasshopper spring for its connexion with the back transom. Out of compliment to the Navy, the "flyer" had blue wheels and a white body; the hood and apron were of black leather. On each small side panel was a crest and a motto in gold.

"Where's Fetherstone?"

"At Tattersall's, where he's gone to try a new hunter. Sir Harry hopes to take it along the turnpike road as far as Kensington, for you can't tell how a horse faces traffic unless you ride it on a busy highway."

"Then the day is ours, sweet Emy, and we'll make the most of it. Do you take a wrap, but don't cover your lovely hair."

Hesitating between prudence and inclination, Emily watched the showy phaeton advancing along the sunny street. "Sir Harry may be vexed if I go," she demurred.

"Has Emy Lyon become docile?" the sailor mocked. "Fie! Where's your spirit? Last summer you'd have been the first for a frolic, and what harm is there? Fetherstone has no more right to jealousy than I; less, because I had you first."

"I'll only come if you promise to behave sensible."

"Clap a stopper on your potato-jaw, my pretty," he said, administering an assuring pat.

Captain Payne's impatience prevented Emily from changing her dress or fetching a hat; she had to be contented with throwing a long cloak with a calash hood over her morning gown. It proved fortunate that she had not made an elaborate toilet, for the carriage seat was so narrow and highly perched that a modishly garbed female would have lost her balance.

Designing to leave town by the Tottenham Court Road, Captain Payne took the most direct route through Seven Dials, heedless of damage he might do to himself or others. The narrow streets were regarded by the inhabitants of abutting tenements and cellars as extensions of private premises where domestic and trade avocations could be pursued in noisy juxtaposition. The streets also served as receptacles for slops, offal, shavings, and parings from the manufactory of pedlars' goods. Those who kept chickens and pigs accommodated them in the public thoroughfare, those who had children turned them out to play in the gutter. Half-dressed women, with besotted faces, sat on doorsteps, their leather stays unlaced, their filthy quilted

petticoats dragging in the dirt. The sick and aged sought to place themselves in gleams of sunshine; those who had quarrels to settle did so on the stone causeways that at intervals crossed the rudimentary paving. None expected the roads to be trespassed upon by a carriage.

Emily, who knew the district and the dangers thereof, would have persuaded Captain Payne to take the longer way through Newport Street and Soho.

"What's sapped your courage, my girl?" he shouted above the racket of wheels. "The spice of life is danger. How d'you suppose a sea officer could face the enemy if he always thought of consequences? The way to victory is to decide upon a course of action and to carry it through careless of life or limb."

The width between the houses barely sufficed to accommodate the phaeton, and the sailor's solicitude for the paint on his wheels caused him to exercise care that he would not have expended upon flesh and bones. As the horses advanced, they drove before them an increasing crowd who had not time to scuttle indoors. Emily, whose high seat afforded a view into upstairs windows, looked ahead at menders of chairs and kettles, knife-grinders, and rabbit-cleaners, hastily gathering up their effects before joining the stampede. Emerging into the open space where the seven streets converged, the crowd surged back and surrounded the carriage. A rough fellow grasped the reins, causing the horses to rear and plunge—the ill-balanced vehicle was in imminent danger of capsizing. Men and women began to climb up the wheels, a bearded young Jew in a long gaberdine seized Emily and tried to pull her down. She hit him in the face with her clenched fist.

"Well done, Emy!" shouted Captain Payne. He stood with his sword in one hand and his pistol in the other. Lunging downwards, he pierced the man's arm, drawing blood. The incident had a sobering effect, the crowd fell back, but kept up a loud and threatening murmur. Emily leaned forward and caught the reins.

"Can you drive?"

"Of course I can!" she indignantly retorted.

"Then take the nearest road to St. Giles, and I'll fire."

The pistol went off and both horses plunged; braced against the footboard, Emily succeeded in holding them. The shot was fired into the air, a gesture that served its purpose, frightening the crowd, which scattered and disappeared down the seven narrow streets.

Clinging to the arm of a potman, the wounded man staggered through the door of the 'Crown.'

Captain Payne watched the casualty with misgiving. "Poor devil!" he said contemptively.

"'Tis hard on him, with maybe his living gone. *Duwch!* there'll be no blessing on us if we leave him so!"

"We daren't linger. I'd gladly give him a guinea, but I can't risk being brought before a magistrate."

"Give me the money; I'll be in the tavern and back before you can cry Dick Turpin!"

Dubiously he brought out his purse and pulled the ring, disclosing several gold and silver coins. Emily looked, and snatched what she wanted. Throwing the reins into his hands, she jumped to the ground, ran to the tavern and in a single gesture opened the door and flung the guinea within. "For the wounded man!" she cried.

Captain Payne had turned the phaeton; it was moving as Emily scrambled back to her seat. He whipped the horses, they dashed into St. Andrew's Street. Emily looked back. She saw a knot of people gathered at the tavern door; she also saw a Bow Street patrol emerging from Earl Street, and announced the fact.

"No matter! Unless we capsize, they won't overhaul us."

The narrow street stretching empty before them created a sense of confidence that soon was shattered. Missiles showered from garret windows, shouts and curses followed the frail carriage as it rocked and lurched. Not since the days of the riots had Emily's blood raced so wildly; all her hardly won prudence vanished on the wind that blew through her tawny curls; she was exalted by danger intoxicating as wine.

In Broad St. Giles the advent of the high-flyer and the galloping horses caused resentment only differing in its manifestation from that displayed in Seven Dials. Horsemen and carriages had to swerve, three heifers being driven from City stables to country pastures took fright and landed in the garden of a large, handsome house. The driver of the Cambridge Coach endeavoured to overtake and obstruct the flying phaeton; whipping his horses, Captain Payne easily outstripped the lumbering stage. Sparks flew and dust swirled. Emily, in imminent danger of being cast to the ground, hung over the hood and grasped the spring that attached the seat to the back carriage. In this position she could see the commotion they left in their wake.

At the same break-neck pace the phaeton careered across the end

of Oxford Street and into the quietness of Tottenham Court Road. On reaching Whitefield's Tabernacle, Captain Payne drew up. "Poor nags are blown," he ruefully observed. "They've given us a fine scamper and made a lot of people look foolish. I vow 'tis the best frolic I've had this year." Turning suddenly, he took Emily in his arms and pressed his mouth to her full red lips. Holding her closely, he fondled her with eager hands. "Does Fetherstone know the way to love a woman?" he jealously asked.

"Not so well as you," Emily admitted as she stirred in his arms. The answer encouraged him to kiss her again, until, aflame with passion, he treated her too roughly for her liking. "Have done, do," she said and pushed him away.

Sulkily subsiding, he watched her narrowly from the tail of his eye. Emily's superior height and physique humiliated while it allured. Irritably he recalled that she looked down upon him when they walked together; moreover she was spirited and unruly as an unbroken filly. Chagrin created a primitive impulse to subvert her careless valiance by his manhood.

With lazy eyes Emily leaned back surveying the open prospect. Across a wide blue sky billowy clouds floated in ever-changing formation, placid evolutions reflected in the pools and dykes of the marsh bordering the road. Away to the north a rural landscape gently climbed to the green heights of Hampstead and Islington. Straight ahead, beyond the marshy meadows, trees and hedges were interspersed with houses, cottages, market-gardens and burial-grounds, until the eye turned to the Foundling Hospital and the tower of St. Andrew's Church. The south-eastern vista was bounded by outposts of the town, by the mansions fronting on Great Russell Street, and the whitewashed walls of Capper's Farm. Of life there was little to be seen. On the Islington Road a waggon with a curved tilt moved slowly towards Tottenham Court Turnpike; in the middle-distance a company of horsemen cantered along the private road to Bedford House, the slate roof of which was visible beyond the museum gardens. Near by, on the other side of a broken hawthorn hedge, ragged men and women stood knee-deep in brackish pools, decoys for leeches willing to cling to skinny, bloodless shanks.

For some time Captain Payne watched the humble servitors of science. "My God! What an awful way of earning a livelihood."

"'Tis a well-paid trade, but not everyone can gather leeches. I supposed the plump and lusty would do best, till I met an old woman

like a bag of bones who often earns as much as eighteen pence a day as a 'tempter'."

Captain Payne laughed, ill-humour abated. "What a name, my pretty, for human scarecrows!" His glance flickered ardently over her face and figure.

Recollection had failed to paint Emily's beauty in its true perfection. Her tawny hair was brighter, her skin clearer and her strange vivid mouth tantalized in a way he had forgotten. That she took no pains to look her best added to her power. Serenely confident, she had no need for artifice, and never paused to wonder what impression she might make. Her sleeves were still rolled up, she was hatless, the ribbon had gone that had tied her short curls, yet she was unconcerned as if she were dressed in the height of fashion.

Captain Payne raised his hand to stroke back her flying ringlets. "Why did you cut your lovely hair? Was it to look like one of Sir Joshua's cherubs?"

"'Twas cut off when I had churchyard fever. But 'tis no matter, because 'twill grow all the better for a shearing, and it's not spoilt my beauty, or Mr. Romney would not be wishful to paint me."

The statement impressed, but aroused new jealousy. "'Tis a new thing for Fetherstone to commission a portrait of a *chère amie*."

"Indeed he has not," Emily responded with her usual candour, "and I've had some work to talk him round. As the cost to him will be nothing, he could hardly stand out against Dr. Graham and Mr. Romney, and on Monday I go for my first sitting."

"Will you give me the picture, sweet Emy?"

"'Tis to hang in the Temple of Health."

A curious enigmatical expression crossed the sea officer's gnome-like face. "No matter, Emy, no matter! What are the charms of paint and canvas to me? You'll give me better than that, my pretty, and before you're many hours older."

For a long time the horses had been pawing the ground, anxious to be gone; now Captain Payne urged them forward with a chirrup. Grinning, he turned to Emily. "'Tis well ye brought that big cloak, sweetheart, for the grass in the meadows may prove damp to lie upon."



CHAPTER TWELVE

ON March the 13th Captain Payne arrived at Hart Street before Sir Harry was dressed. Garbed in a night-cap, which concealed hair-curlers, and a handsome morning gown ill cloaking naked shins, the baronet sipped hot chocolate before the parlour fire. Preferring a substantial breakfast, Emily ate bread-and-butter and potted char by the table, a position that afforded a view of the street and the ceaseless procession of vendors, ballad-singers, sweeps and their small apprentices, itinerant craftsmen, and occasionally a sedan-chair taking a short cut from Lincoln's Inn Fields to Charing Cross. Captain Payne's dashing arrival in the high-flyer caused panic and to Emily, consternation. She caught her breath and choked.

"My dear girl, you eat greedily; you are a *gourmand*, not a *gourmet*."

Unable to retort, she coughed and spluttered and listened to Mary Mudge admitting the visitor.

The gallant captain's advent came as a surprise to Sir Harry, who had not heard him approach; his welcome lacked fervour. "What do ye at this hour? If you're minded to take Emily out, ye'll see she's still breakfasting."

"I didn't come for that, but I'll be charmed to follow your suggestion and escort Emy anywhere she fancies," Captain Payne imperiously returned as he thumped Emily on the back. "There! Easy, my pretty!"

Gasping, she wiped her eyes. "I'm all right now!"

"Wouldn't do for you to suffocate on the celebration of a glorious victory. The moment I heard of our successes I determined to be the first to bring the news." Saying no more, the sea officer looked with covert mischief at his friend.

Sir Harry endured the silence until curiosity overcame his displeasure. "Gad, Jack, if you've something to say, say it!"

Helping himself to a slice of bread-and-butter, Captain Payne ate with relish. "There's so much to recount that I fear to weary you. This is very good bread-and-butter, Emy. I'll take another piece, and I could do with a cup of Fetherstone's chocolate. I was so excited by our glorious successes I forgot to break my fast."

Wriggling impatiently in his chair, Sir Harry growled: "For God's sake don't beat about the bush!"

"Now you admit you want to hear, I don't mind telling ye. Our sea forces have taken possession of the islands of St. Eustatius, St. Martin and Seba." After gleefully recording the capture, Captain Payne became more explicit: "Secret orders were sent by frigate to Rodney to attack these Dutch possessions, which, since France came into the war, have been free ports. The *mynheers* have waxed fat under their neutral flag; for years American rebels and the French fleet have benefited, and even British traders—more shame to them—have not scrupled to send cargoes there. What will not merchants do for profit! Now that thorn in our flesh is extracted and we gain immense booty—over 150 laden merchant ships and six frigates. Cotton, indigo, tobacco, and sugar to the value of millions, as well as naval stores, badly wanted, God knows, to make good our losses in the late hurricane. A great stroke, and not a shot fired. Further, a convoy of thirty ships with their escort, a sixty-gun ship, was pursued and brought back. The news is astonishing, incredible, and I envy the lucky fellows whose pockets will be lined with prize money at the expense of Dutch, French and Americans."

"And 'tis to be hoped *un coup de grâce* to the traitorous West Indians who, by contraband trade, have kept up the supplies of our enemies," Sir Harry bluntly remarked.

"Mind what you're saying, Fetherstone. I'm not one to take offence unless my loyalty is questioned. The Paynes have been King's men since the cause of Charles I was supported by Stephen Payne, which led to his flight from England to St. Christopher. His Majesty can count on scores of loyal subjects in the West Indian Islands."

Looking flushed and contrite, Sir Harry made a hasty disclaimer. "No offence intended, no offence!" Finding that Captain Payne maintained an indignant demeanour, the baronet rose and held out his hand. "I apologize to ye, although I had no thought of making personal insinuations. *Entre nous* I didn't recall where St. Kitts stood on the map."

Captain Payne shook hands, but he still harped on the fancied in-

sult. "The peoples of St. Kitts cannot be classed with the Dutch merchants of St. Eustatius who, under protection of a neutral flag, have distributed supplies to the belligerent islands and the North American continent."

"I admit my error, so let the matter drop, there's a good fellow. 'Faith, I never wished to touch any man on the tender subject of his honour. Upon my soul, I'm quite ashamed!"

Having manœuvred his friend from an aggressive to a contrite mood, Captain Payne appeared satisfied. To show there was no ill feeling, he emptied Sir Harry's chocolate-pot and finished Emily's bread-and-butter. Thus regaled, he again set forth to disseminate the glad tidings of a brilliant naval exploit.

Throughout the visit Emily sat tongue-tied and listless, a victim of depression born of her surrender to the sea officer's gay blandishments. For three nights and two days conscience had allowed no respite, tearing her between shame at her treachery to Sir Harry and fear lest he should discover it. Dread of disclosure predominating, Emily roused herself in order to allay suspicions that might be caused by Captain Payne's untimely visit. Her caresses were so pretty and her flattery so kind that Sir Harry was quite infatuated when they left the house together soon after eleven o'clock. She was bound for Cavendish Square for her first sitting to Mr. Romney, Sir Harry proceeded to Tattersall's to bid for the hunter that had captured his fancy. Emily's proposal to accompany her protector so far as Hyde Park Turnpike evoked warm approval, but her plan to walk up the walnut avenue to Tyburn met with a less happy reception.

"There's too much temptation in the park *pour une belle femme*."

"Indeed you should be able to trust me!"

"I should, but can I?" Sir Harry retorted with a shrewd look.

As usual, Emily took her own way, but the short conversation left a disturbing echo to harass her mind.

The town was *en fête* for Admiral Rodney. Flags flew on the Admiralty buildings, Northumberland House, the Royal Mews and on mansions in Piccadilly, while bunting and coloured rags draped the windows of lesser houses. Street-singers bawled songs hastily written, and every stage-coach that clattered through the streets was decked with rosettes and paper flowers. Outside the 'White Horse Cellar' the Jews who commonly sold oranges, pencils, sponges and brushes were doing a fine trade in favours made in naval colours. Footpaths were thronged with people hurrying to Hyde Park to see the King's

Guards parading and to hear the guns fired. Gentry, actuated by the same object, bowled along in coaches, phaetons and curricles with accompanying postilions, outriders and running footmen.

Sir Harry, who professed much concern for Emily's emotional safety, displayed none for her physical peril. Setting her down by the high brick wall of the Green Park, he drove on without turning to see how she negotiated the crowded road that separated her from the wooden gates to Hyde Park. Minutes passed and she could not cross. Vehicles of the handsomest description rumbled past and covered her with dust, gorgeously apparelled footmen, carrying cut lemons mounted on long white wands, ogled her as they ran. She almost despaired when an intermission occurred and two grooms in the royal livery came galloping before a phaeton driven by postilions. Emily was quick to recognize the Prince of Wales in the uniform of the 10th Dragoons. Their glances met with the same effect as upon a former occasion outside Almack's. The Prince's eyes became alert, and when his horses had swept him on he turned to stare boldly and smile in a meaning way. Emily's response was a saucy look. Running across the road, she gained the park wall just as the royal carriage disappeared; before His Royal Highness vanished he saluted in a very gallant manner.

The incident raised her spirits. Attention from one so exalted was flattering; her own exemplary reaction thereto gave cause for even greater satisfaction. 'Twas not every girl who would boldly flout the Prince of Wales. . . . With self-esteem re-established, Emily tripped lightly to the boom of the Hyde Park guns.

She was late for her appointment, and found Mr. Romney impatiently waiting on his doorstep. Taking her arm, he hurried her into the house.

"My dear friend," he cried, "your arrival has given me fresh spirits and raised me from apprehensions. I have been low some days past, and the thought that you might not come has proved well-nigh insupportable." He wiped his perspiring forehead and his hands with a canary-yellow handkerchief. Powder, dislodged from his hair by agitated fingers, thickly covered the shoulders of his paint-stained smock, and his whole appearance betokened the distress he had endured.

"'Twas early I meant to be," Emily affirmed, "but I got caught up in the crowds huzzahing for our conquests. Guns firing are as

draughts of strong wine, and 'tis no wonder our sailors fight like lions when inspired by such grand sounds."

"With that look on your face you are Minerva directing Cadmus to sow the dragon's teeth," said Romney.

Emily entered a finely proportioned apartment facing Cavendish Square converted with little regard for elegance into a combination of workshop and studio. In one corner were a sink and two gun-metal bowls scoured to silver. A kitchen fireplace and oven replaced a hob grate, but the white-marble sculptured chimney-piece remained, and served as a shelf for china palettes, jars of poppy and linseed oils and bowls of paint cooling from the oven. Between fireplace and sink stood a long dresser furnished with chemist's scales, slabs of porphyry, sifters, supple knives, heavy granite knobs for grinding colours, earthenware pots and wooden boxes, resembling small tea-caddies, stained with the bright powders within. Above the dresser hung a large blackboard chalked with formulæ and such words as cadmium scarlet, cerulean blue, terre verte. These trade appliances, being congregated in a corner, could be concealed by blue velvet curtains. Three easels, a model's throne, Chippendale chairs and a circular table furnished the studio. Canvases and partly painted portraits leant against the wainscoting; on the principal wall hung an oil painting: "The Death of King Edmund", a cartoon in black chalk of a Lapland witch surveying from a rock mariners shipwrecked in a tempest of her own creation and three violins, one finished and two still in the making.

Emily's roaming glance lighted upon a small easel and an empty canvas of coarse twill. "Is that for my picture?"

"Yes, just for the head. Dr. Graham stipulated for a portrait costing no more than twenty guineas. I fancy he is not doing so handsomely this year as last, and rumours are afloat of a removal to Schomberg House with the idea of surprising the town with fresh wonders."

Emily had expected to sit for a full length; she had hoped, too, that her plumed hat, her gown and quilted satin petticoat, and the muff that hid her arms to the elbows would be immortalized in paint. . . .

Three sittings sufficed for the head, a kit-cat depicting Emily as the Goddess of Health with her curls banded and gathered into a knot. While Mr. Romney added finishing touches, Emily joyfully agreed to act as model for a series of fancy pictures from the antique,

a promise made in the dark, as she knew no more of mythology and classical art than could be learnt from Dr. Graham's ambiguous speeches. Her eager questions soon confounded Mr. Romney, who had recourse to a portfolio of drawings executed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Nollekens and Zoffany from Mr. Towneley's collection of marbles.

"The lack of a sound classical grounding is a grievous handicap to an artist," Mr. Romney confessed. "In that way Reynolds has an advantage over Nollekens and myself, who owe nothing to education."

Finally Emily was given a pile of illustrated books and the task of choosing subjects for pictures. "I have so little time either to think or read for myself, that I must rely upon my friends." The artist sighed. "This cursed portrait-painting! How it shackles me!"

Unhappily, the promising scheme was doomed. Captain Payne, awaiting the Admiralty finding on the charges preferred against him by the Portuguese Government, continued to press his friendship upon Sir Harry and his attentions upon Emily. Assuming the privileges of a welcome guest, he visited Hart Street at unorthodox hours, invited himself to meals, waylaid Emily in the streets and acted as her esquire to remote places of entertainment. Neither Sir Harry's scowls nor blunt speeches deterred. Gaily impudent, Captain Payne ignored hints not to his liking. Immersed in the pleasures of the moment, Emily took no heed for the future. After the first surrender, her conscience became easy. She kissed both lovers with hearty fervour and left the depths of her temperament unruffled. With outlets for her abundant energy, she was happy and gained daily in beauty; she lived in a beatitude of complaisant self-esteem. Its disruption was painful as it was sudden. Sir Harry, having signified his intention of spending Good Friday at a "Welsh Main" in the cockpit of the 'Pickled Egg' at Clerkenwell, unaccountably returned before he was expected, and found Emily and Captain Payne ensconced in the parlour at Hart Street. They sat at opposite sides of the table, playing piquet with great concentration; Emily was breathless and her cheeks were flushed; a crumpled hair ribbon lay on the sofa by the fire. The sea officer was unruffled, and his big black eyes displayed no emotion save pleasure at the sight of his friend.

"Now you've got back we can play cribbage," he remarked with satisfaction.

Sir Harry advanced menacingly. Grasping Captain Payne by the coat collar, he shook him. "Damn you, you little insignificant, good-for-nothing upstart! I'll suffer no poaching when I'm absent. Out ye'll go, my little dark gentleman, and thank my good nature that I don't break every bone in your body." As he talked, so he buffeted the smaller man along the passage and out into the street.

After the front door banged, Emily waited in excited trepidation for what was to come. Captain Payne had not made a passive exit. Sir Harry's eyes were already swelling, his cravat was torn, his hair had come down and various buttons were wrenched from his coat. Making no effort to restore his dress, he came over to Emily and soundly boxed her ears. The attack was so brisk and unexpected that she stood staring, while her head reeled.

"You baggage, you!" he growled. "You're as common as a barber's chair in which the whole of the parish sit to be trimmed."

Becoming prudent in emergency, Emily encouraged tears of anguish to trickle down her face. "Indeed you'll be sorry for what you are saying, for a more cruel reproach I've never heard! Sure 'tis not right to serve me ill for no better reason than being kind to your friends. 'Tis no way to treat a brave sea officer neither! But for Captain Payne you'd not have met me!"

"'Twould have been no misfortune! You're so vain you think you're conferring a favour by allowing me to keep you!"

"And so I am! There are many who'd be pleased to step into your shoes, and one of them the highest in the land!"

He looked at her suspiciously. "What might ye mean by that?"

"The Prince of Wales has smiled upon me more than once."

"Then I'll move ye from temptation. To-morrow we'll go back to Uppark, as ye cannot be trusted in town!"

Emily wept and packed all night; she also wrote letters to Dr. Graham and Mr. Romney, letters which Mary Mudge was to consign by the penny post. To both gentlemen Emily promised a speedy resumption of her services, an optimistic hope that seemed to become substantial when recorded on paper.

Mary's uneasiness as to the future was testified by continual tears and a general collapsed appearance. Her hair, always an emotional barometer, lay uncoiled in damp strands down her back and served as a rag to wipe her nose. Her shoulders drooped and even her slippers shared in the general dejection by flapping from her heels. Rousing Sir Harry at five in the morning to take the cold bath

prescribed by Dr. Graham, anxiety and Emily's promptings rendered her daring.

"Are you wishful for me to leave?" she breathlessly demanded.

The baronet sat up in bed. His countenance was bruised and swelled by Captain Payne's knuckles; a cotton night-cap, tied beneath his chin, bulged with the shapes of hair-curlers. He responded testily: "Not at present! Ye'll do as well as another to keep the place aired."

Mary was persistent: "Shall you and Emy be coming back?"

Peering between puffy lids, he answered angrily: "I shall return, and that's all that concerns ye!"

While he splashed and snorted in the adjoining room, Emily and her friend conferred as to the implication of his words and reached no satisfactory conclusion. Sir Harry ate his breakfast in silence, and in silence supervised the loading of his coach with the numerous boxes and packages he and Emily had acquired since they came to town.

As the milkmaids carried their pails from house to house and chalked their tallies on the doorposts, Emily set forth with her morose protector, wondering if she was banished permanently from London.

Due to the muddy state of the Portsmouth Road, the journey was tedious. Half-a-dozen horses were required to draw the lumbering coach, each pair charged at eighteen pence a mile. Instead of reaching Uppark in five stages, the horses were too spent to proceed beyond Petersfield. Only one fresh pair being available, Sir Harry had to leave his ancestral vehicle at the 'Red Lion' and continue the journey in a hired chaise, a finale that in nowise improved his temper.

The following morning he paid an early visit to the stables and rode away without a word to Emily. Later she learned that he had gone to Arundel Castle with the intention of staying the night. She waited until the coach brought her clothes before ordering her mare to be saddled; the church bells were ringing as she set forth.

It was the 15th of April and an early spring. In sheltered places chestnuts and hawthorns were in leaf; even the oaks had a green sheen on their topmost branches. Primroses and violets carpeted the woods, and from every tree and coppice came ecstatic songs of birds.

Emily took the bridle-path to North Marden, thence through Chilgrove to Heathbarn Down. Now and again she met children carrying baskets of gaily coloured paste eggs, and girls decked in new finery going to meet their sweethearts. On the west wind came the mellowed jangle of church bells; from the sky a joyous song of

triumph flung to earth by a score of larks twirling bravely up to heaven.

The grass tracks across Heathbarn Down were sheltered by furze bushes and bramble thickets, which rendered the air warm. One hollow, deeper than the rest, was a blaze of yellow and heavy with the voluptuous scent of gorse. Perceiving the pleasant haven, Emily dismounted, and, leaving the mare to roam, clambered down the bank to fling herself on a bed of young bracken. Discarding her riding-hat, she pillowed her head on her arms and blinked up at the cotton-wool clouds sailing across the blue sky. Bees and insects droned; a yellow-hammer, perched on a prickly bush, plaintively chanted: "Love-me-a-little-if-you-can, love-me-a-little-if-you-can." Gorse-buds burst with sharp explosions; a fieldmouse sheltering beneath a dock leaf watched fearfully with beady eyes.

Lulled by sunshine and the monotony of small sounds, Emily dozed, to be suddenly roused by the thud of hoofs on the path that skirted the hollow. Looking up, she saw a boy on a white pony staring at her with eager recognition. She smiled amiably, but seconds elapsed before her sleepy wits identified Lord Brooke as a friend.

Jumping to her feet, Emily lifted her trailing habit and scrambled up the bank. "Are you alone, my pretty dear?"

"Yes. My grandfather is at Windsor attending on His Majesty, so I have only grooms to ride with, who are such stupid fellows they can't tell the difference between a moth and a butterfly."

"One is covered with golden dust, the other is painted bright like a flower," Emily remarked with a clever air.

"A moth folds its wings flat on its back; a butterfly places them together like hands in prayer."

"Oh," she meekly responded.

Lord Brooke struggled to dismount, which he did clumsily, due to the iron on his leg. In a moment Emily was beside him and had her arms round his waist. Willingly resigning himself to her care, he reached the ground without mishap.

Leaving the pony to crop the grass, Emily and the Earl of Warwick's heir descended to the warm hollow. Lord Brooke sat down gingerly, with his leg straight and stiff upon the bracken. Leather collars encircling knee and ankle were connected by iron rods, a strap under his shoe kept the instrument in position. As he rested, so his hand sought to ease the pressure on his knee. He was a round-faced child with bright cheeks and evasive dark eyes that sometimes

looked fey. Silky brown hair, too fine to keep in order, fell in a thick fringe over his forehead. His manner was repressed and watchful; his moods fluctuated between the extremes of humility and assertive boasting.

"This is a very charming place you have found, ma'am," he remarked in polite tones. "'Tis surprising I had not observed it, for I ride here most days at the wish of my grandmother, who considers the downs safe from footpads and highwaymen."

"'Tis away from coach roads," Emily acknowledged. "Coming from London yesterday we passed a man newly hanged on the gibbet above the Devil's Punch-bowl, and sure I never beheld an uglier fellow nor one who looked more deserving of punishment." She paused, noticing that Lord Brooke had blenched. "No need there is to grieve for a wretch who would rob and kill as soon as wink his eye." Her voice sounded warm and encouraging.

"I know I'm a coward to hate passing a gibbet, but I do, even if 'tis empty. My step-mother taunts me for it and says my brothers will not wince at the sight of a gallows, and sure I hope they won't."

Placing her arm round his shoulders, Emily administered a comforting squeeze. "There are few gibbets, considering the number of highwaymen infesting the turnpike roads."

"It depends which way you go; between here and Warwick Castle there are six."

"You mustn't heed them."

"That's what my Uncle Charles says, and perhaps with him I shall not care so much. He's spending Easter at Steep Hill in the Isle of Wight, and at the end of the month breaks his journey to take me back to Warwick."

"He'll keep you safe, so you need not fear ugly things."

"Both my Uncle Charles and my Uncle Robert are bold as lions," Lord Brooke boasted; "my younger uncle is a lieutenant-colonel in the 10th Dragoons, so of course he is very brave." In response to Lord Brooke's pleading, Emily sang one of the hymns which had so greatly pleased him in West Dean Church. After fervently rendering *There Is a Land of Pure Delight*, she broke into lighter vein with *The Lass of Peaty's Mill*, a song frequently rendered by fashionable ladies. It pleased her audience even better than the hymn, and she had to give an encore. Gradually his little Lordship, forgetting the dignity befitting one who had passed his ninth birthday, inclined nearer and nearer, until Emily put her arms round him and cuddled

him to her warm breast. Snuggling his cheek against the folds of velvet, he looked up with a wistful smile.

"Will you sing for my Uncle Charles when he comes?"

"I shan't be in the way of meeting him, my pretty love."

"Well, if you should."

"I'll always oblige if I'm asked," Emily rejoined.

A continuance of sunny weather allowed Emily and Lord Brooke to meet every morning. He brought cakes and sandwiches from West Dean; Emily contributed toffee, which she made herself over the fire in the little parlour. For her birthday, on the 26th of April, they contemplated a feast on a grander scale. Lord Brooke talked hopefully of brandy grapes and punch jelly; Emily promised custard tarts and ginger beer from the widow's shop in Harting village.

"If my Uncle Charles be come, shall we invite him?"

"He wouldn't enjoy it, a fine gentleman accustomed to dining with Dukes and Duchesses."

"But never with anyone so lovely. Uncle Charles collects *virtù*, which means pictures and statues from Italy. At his new house in Portman Square there is a marble lady, very like you, and my uncle says she represents true taste."

Emily had no calls upon her time because Sir Harry had returned to town with the Earl of Surrey. The Duke of Norfolk's yellow coach made a detour to embrace Uppark, and while Sir Harry was upstairs selecting clothes to be packed, the Earl sat in the Tapestry Room drinking rum and water, which Emily dispensed. He wore a greasy old travelling cape, brown corduroy small-clothes, and the curiously cut long plain coat of bluish-purple cloth always worn by him, and said to be imposed as a penance. His cravat was limp and grey with dirt, his closely cropped hair was destitute of powder.

Above the silver cup his watering, bloodshot eyes stared roguishly at his hostess. "Harry's going to challenge Willett Payne to a duel," he remarked with a gurgle.

"My God, I hope he won't!"

"Don't ye trouble, Emily. Payne's too small to reach his heart, and Fetherstone's too slow to inflict an injury. Unsheathing their swords will do 'em good; there's nothing like the sight of cold steel for chilling ardour."

Sir Harry's manner was morose when he said farewell, and he made no reference to his return. Shaken by the Earl of Surrey's in-

formation, Emily's embrace was impassioned. "Don't go, please do not!"

Gratification and suspicion intermingled in the baronet's glance, but he answered: "My plans are made," and walked with stately deportment to the coach.

The Earl of Surrey, skipping back with ponderous playfulness, inclined his reeking mouth to Emily's ear: "Trust him to me, m'dear; I'll warrant to keep him as safely drunk as I mean to be myself!"

Although her future was in jeopardy, Emily spent no anxious moments; indeed, Sir Harry scarcely entered her thoughts after he drove away. Sometimes she wondered if it would be counted as a good or a bad trait that her lovers were out of mind as soon as they were out of sight. . . .

Meanwhile friendship with Lord Brooke advanced. Confidences were exchanged; Emily told him about catching the cow-pox when she was a young maid; and of her uncle, William Kidd, who had married Mary Pova after seeing her dark face looking through the tilt of a gypsy van. In return Lord Brooke described an approach to the castle blasted through solid rock, and a lake a mile long and 600 feet broad, made to the Earl of Warwick's order. "Father bought up two streets and added the land to our grounds, and he built a stone bridge and gave it to the town. He's bought pictures and statues and planted acres of trees—in short, there's no end to the improvements. Though father claims to have made the Castle the finest in England, my Uncle Charles draws a long face and asks what avail it will be when executions are threatened." Pausing, Lord Brooke eyed Emily before asking in a casual voice: "What *is* an execution?"

"'Tis but a polite name for death on the gallows."

The boy blanched. "I feared it meant something bad. But maybe my father will be warned in time by Uncle Charles, who is so clever that he had a seat on the Board of Trade and now holds a post in the Board of Admiralty."

Emily had heard so much about the Honourable Charles Francis Greville from his devoted and admiring nephew that her curiosity was more than commonly aroused. She began to speculate upon the chances of meeting him, and to plan how she would act if an encounter took place. 'Twas very certain that the bold ways which pleased ordinary folk would only estrange such an elegant and punctilious gentleman. . . .

On the birthday morning Lord Brooke, first at the rendezvous, stood excitedly waving as Emily approached along the grass ride. When she was within hailing distance he shouted: "Uncle Charles came last night in a post coach and four from Portsmouth; he brought me sea shells and pebbles from the beach below Steep Hill."

Emily handed down custard tarts, a cake and a flagon of ginger beer. Excitement made her heart race and her hands tremble; prudently she waited to dismount until she was ready for the encounter. "Is your uncle waiting in the hollow?" she inquired on an indifferent note.

Limping gingerly down the incline, Lord Brooke answered without turning his head: "Uncle Charles set out for a smart ride after breakfast. I told him I should be here with a beautiful lady, but though I tried to force his promise to come back this way, he denied me, saying he would not commit himself to an undertaking he might feel unable to fulfil."

Inordinate disappointment quenched Emily's ardent spirits, yet such was her volatility she was soon buoyed up by schemes for a future meeting. This day was Thursday, and 'twas unlikely a long journey would be undertaken at the tail of a week. . . .

Lord Brooke, hopping across the bracken, shouted elatedly: "We set out at cock-crow to-morrow, and 'twill be black night before we reach the Castle."

The sun still shone, but the brightness had dimmed. Chilly winds seemed to penetrate the sheltered nook, and the yellow-hammer's song assumed a mocking note.

"I thought you were frightened of highwaymen hanging in chains; 'twould be worse to meet a live one in the dark," Emily taunted.

"I shan't care with my Uncle Charles."

The birthday party which had begun badly did not improve as it proceeded. To her mortification, Emily found herself eclipsed in interest by the shadow of Charles Greville. The cakes she had procured with much trouble evoked no thanks from her guest; he ate perfunctorily, forgetful of his promise to bring dainties from West Dean.

Scraps of intelligence relating to Steep Hill only increased Emily's chagrin. "My Lord Dysart filled his villa so full with the Stormonts and Cathcarts that there was no corner for Lady Frances Tollemache till Uncle Charles and Heneage Legge offered to sleep in the summer-house."

Emily answered crossly: "'Tis cold they must have been."

"They'd have tiger-skin rugs to cover them," Lord Brooke surmised as he tried to hit the yellow-hammer with bits of birthday cake.

She watched him dourly. There was no denying the cake was stale, but 'twas bad manners to treat a gift scornfully. . . .

"The cold of the summer-house could be nothing to what Great-Uncle William endures on His Sicilian Majesty's hunting expeditions. In March he was away with King Ferdinand three weeks in the Apennines and the party shot six hundred and thirteen wild boars, with wolves and foxes to make up a thousand slain."

"That's the wickedest slaughter I've ever heard of, and a gentleman old enough to be a great-uncle ought to know better," Emily decisively pronounced.

"Uncle Charles says he prefers to hear of antiquities and *virtù* to barbarity, but when I'm a man I mean to kill boars and bears, and I've a notion of taking Uncle William's place as Ambassador at Naples."

Lord Brooke talked in a loud, bold voice at variance with his frail appearance. Excitement painted patches of bright colour on his cheeks and caused his eyes to shine with unnatural brilliance. Every now and again he furtively dabbed with his handkerchief blood seeping through his stocking from a wound chafed by his leg iron. Observing his action, Emily stifled sharp words that rose to her tongue.

She had been keeping for a birthday surprise the interesting fact that she was Mary Duggan's daughter. Lord Brooke's changed behaviour altered her intention. Emily Lyon wasn't the one to stand boasting talk, that she wasn't. . . . If he thought only of lords and ladies, likely he'd scorn her for being the daughter of his father's servant. . . . Scorn she wouldn't bear, no, not even if it came from one unlikely to make old bones. . . .

Lying with his head on his arm, Lord Brooke watched her. "How old are you this day, Emily?"

"Sixteen."

"I don't believe you! Why, you're as grown up as any of the married ladies I know. Are you married?"

"No," Emily muttered.

"I should have guessed you were; spinster ladies are generally thinner. Very likely you're married and don't know it." Snuggling

into the bracken he said: "Now you may sing, Emily—something new. I'm tired of *The Lass of Peaty's Mill*."

Hitherto Emily had selected her songs carefully, but now anger overtook discretion. A hasty review of her repertoire prompted her to choose a cant ditty of St. Giles's much applauded by Sir Harry and his friends. And she wouldn't sing it quietly, neither. . . . If so they pleased, the gentry should hear it from West Dean to Lady Holt Park. . . .

*"Ye slang-boys all, since wedlock's nooze
Together fast has tied
Moll Blabbermums and rowling Joe
Each other's joy and pride,
Your broomsticks and tin kettles bring,
With canisters and stones;
Ye butchers bring your cleavers too,
Likewise your marrow-bones;
For ne'er a brace in marriage hitched
By no one can be found,
That's half so blest as Joe and Moll,
Search all St. Giles's round."*

Standing defiantly with flushed face and eyes wrathfully glinting, Emily looked a lovely fury. So thought Charles Greville quietly observing the performance from the shelter of a furze-bush. In the interests of his nephew's morals he stepped into the open as Emily, with increased gusto, embarked upon the second stanza. When she saw him her voice trailed away and she stood abashed, with the colour coming and going in her cheeks.

Bowing, he waited for her to take the initiative. She did so sulkily, as if defending herself against an accusation. "There are many who prefer tavern ditties to ballads fine ladies sing in drawing-rooms, and for myself I don't wonder at it, for more foolish songs I never heard."

"Your experience has been unfortunate. I have heard ladies sing delightful ballads of exquisite taste."

"Then indeed you are to be envied," Emily answered brusquely, and flung herself on the grass. Despite resolution, tears filled her eyes and threatened to brim over. What fate could be more cruel than to appear in a bad light when one most desired to please? . . .

Mr. Greville hesitated, and finally sat on a stone at a short distance

from his nephew and Emily. She studied him from the corner of her eye; he represented something new to her experience. His face bore no tokens of free living, which she had come to associate with a gentleman. Born prematurely old, Charles Greville at thirty-two was more staid and cautious than many men twice his age. He had grace and dignity and an attentively courteous manner that, under any circumstances, concealed his real thoughts and feelings. His most arresting features were large, melancholy, brown eyes, deep set beneath prominent, well-marked brows. He had a long nose and an oval chin; a small black mole, resembling a patch, on his right cheek, accentuated the ivory pallor of a clear, fine skin. His lips were full, well shaped, and defined by the shadow of his shaven moustache. In build he was tall and slim; in deportment precise and measured.

"At the risk of appearing presumptuous I would compliment you on your voice. 'Tis as pure in tone as Mrs. Sheridan's; had you the advantage of a like training you would be qualified for similar success."

Lord Brooke eagerly intervened: "But you haven't heard Emily at her best, Uncle Charles. When she sings hymns you'd think you were listening to an angel."

"Versatility is an attribute of the true artist," Mr. Greville observed as he delicately took snuff from a blue enamel box.

For the first time in her life Emily was tongue-tied. Sitting on the ground with her habit flowing around her, she kept her eyes down-cast on her fingers making ruin of the plume in her hat. Her pose permitted Mr. Greville to make a leisurely inspection. Had she seen his admiration it would have brought her comfort. Anxious to impress his uncle still further, Lord Brooke resumed the rôle of showman.

"Emily's shy," he began; "for all her grown-up looks she's only sixteen this day. At first I didn't believe her, but now I see her acting so sulky I know 'tis true. Ladies and gentlemen never show their feelings."

"Ss-sh! Manners! Manners!"

"And whose fault is it if I am out of humour?" Emily demanded of Lord Brooke. "I came here ready to be pleased with everything, but all you did was to boast of your grand relations and crumble the cake I brought with much trouble to myself. My God, if this be a birthday, I hope I never have another!"

Jumping to her feet, she started to run up the bank, stumbling over her long skirt. She was sobbing when Charles Greville overtook her.

"You must not go away thinking so ill of us," he said in kind, modulated tones. But Emily would not stop to be reasoned with, and he was obliged to pursue. Catching her arm, he held it fast "Come now! A little boy's rudeness isn't worth tears. I lament his behaviour, due to weak health and the lack of a governing hand."

"It isn't that I mind him acting rude—'tis to be forgiven in one so weakly. What hurts me—for I have a heart—is his not liking the little feast I had prepared, and forgetting to bring anything himself to make it better. I was out at six this morning to fetch the tarts and cake from Harting. Had I been able to make the things myself, 'tis fresh they would have been, but at Uppark I must act like a lady and keep away from the kitchens."

Mr. Greville glanced at her queerly. "Is Sir Harry at home?" he inquired.

"He's been in London these ten days."

"Then you are your own mistress and may come back to be my hostess at your birthday feast."

Emily had never enjoyed herself so well. Morning merged into afternoon, and still Charles Greville lingered. Between them they ate the food disdained by Lord Brooke, who signified his dudgeon by clambering from the dell to sit in proud isolation on the brink. Mr. Greville told Emily of the house he had erected in Portman Square, with "drawing-rooms to form a good suite for a bachelor, the offices equal to a larger house. I built on speculation," he naively confessed, "and that I might find a purchaser, have made it pretty." He described his collection of statues and a good show of pictures, which included "a St. Catherine of Siena by Parmegiano, an Anibal Carrach, and a Gurdo Cagnacci."

The novelty of his conversation surprised as much as its purport enthralled. Vaguely Emily envisaged a society not solely subverted by lusts of the flesh—a state as satisfactory in its way as the pursuit of glory in battle.

A brewing storm finally obliged them to part. Mounted and ready to ride away, Emily looked down with a wistful smile on her lovely face. "Will you forget my badness and remember only the good?"

Charles Greville gravely kissed her hand. "I shall remember you always for your sweetness and for your beauty."

She rode home in a bemused condition that rendered her oblivious of thundery rain pelting from a black and sulphur sky. On reaching Uppark it was an anti-climax to find Sir Harry ensconced in the saloon. The welcome she accorded was dutiful, but so abstracted that it aroused his curiosity.

"I expect 'tis the storm; electricity upsets the head, so I've heard."

Sir Harry also seemed distrait. Presently he fixed his eyes keenly upon her, saying: "The Portuguese Government withdrew their complaint against Willett Payne, and 'tis said he's *nommé* to another *vaisseau de guerre*. I meant to challenge him, so his absence was *une bonne chance*, for which you will feel grateful."

"I shouldn't wish you to ride to Tyburn."

He looked at her jealously. "Ye'd grieve more for Willett Payne."

"I'd mourn for both of you acting so foolish; but if you mean I care aught for him you're mistaken. I shouldn't lose a wink if I never beheld him again."

"Is that true, Emily?"

"An you please I'll swear it on the Bible."

"Upon my soul, I'm glad to hear ye say that. I was horribly agitated when I thought you had yielded to Jack's blandishments. Now I know how we stand, things will be different, Emily, and we'll get on together like a brace of turtle-doves."

To his surprise, Emily flung herself face down upon a sofa and broke into a paroxysm of weeping. Sir Harry was accustomed to her rages, but not to disturbances of sensibility. He immediately responded to the flattering reflection her grief implied. Kneeling on the floor, he gathered her into his arms. "My sweet girl, I never knew you cared. I am *désolé*. Tell me what I can do and I'll make amends. Ye shall have a new gown, a jewel, anything you please."

"I want naught but to be left alone," Emily sobbed.

"Harry knows; Harry understands," he whispered. "Poor little woman, *les passions mettent le désordre dans l'âme*."

Exhaustion terminated Emily's tears; listlessly sitting up, she mopped her swollen eyes. "I didn't mean to behave so weak," she observed.

"Faith, Emily, in face of your new *sensibilité* I'm almost afraid to tell ye of a further parting. But there's no help for it, because I've engaged to accompany my friend Mr. Winstanley on a journey through Hanover and Saxony. 'Tis only fair to confess that the tour was to be a convenient pretext for breaking our connexion."

"Am I to be alone for long?"

"Mr. Winstanley proposes to set out in the middle of May and to return before the shooting season."

"All the summer," Emily murmured.

"'Twill soon pass," Sir Harry consoled, "and if ye prefer to live in Hart Street and to work for Dr. Graham, *je ne demande pas mieux*."

Undressing that night, Sir Harry came upon a letter he had forgotten to deliver; Emily received it with a cry of pleasure and eagerly split the wafers. Franked by the Earl of Surrey, it was addressed from Warwick Castle and written in the governess's spiky chirography and elegant style. It ran thus:—

"Yr Mamma, Mary Duggan, begs me to acknowledge yr dutiful letter. She hopes to see ye (D.V.) when she accompanies her noble employers to their mansion in St. James's Square. Ye household expect to reach London on Tuesday ye 29th day of May and to remain in town until ye month of July, when my Lady (being with child) returns to ye Castle to be brought to bed in September. Yr Mamma is in good health and is gratified to learn of yr industry. She sends kind love, and her mark thus:—X *per pro., Maria Vancouver*."

Emily handed the letter to Sir Harry and relinquished the candle so that he might have light to read. "This is very satisfactory," he remarked, "I can now leave ye in London assured of your good behaviour."



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SIR HARRY embarked in a brig from Tower Steps on a voyage to Hamburg that was expected to last six days. Emily made him a broad belt stuffed over the belly with a horse-hair pad, and lacings that could be pulled tightly, a contrivance generally favoured by sea travellers, as it restrained the involuntary motion of the stomach occasioned by a rolling vessel. Sir Harry provided himself with a second safeguard, a flask of cold brandy and water; despite these dual precautions he looked far from happy when Emily bade him farewell on Wednesday evening. He and his friend Mr. Winstanley were to lie the night at the 'Three Cranes' in Thames Street in order to be aboard betimes in the morning. Seated in a hackney-coach, he looked with a pale, anxious face over boxes of provisions, portmanteaux, medicine-chests and stout, leather-covered baskets. Emily managed to shed a few placid tears as she watched the vehicle rattle towards Bow Street. Relationship had been undisturbed by quarrels since she heard of the impending holiday; as she saw him go she felt quite fond of him.

She celebrated her freedom by spring-cleaning on north-country methods. Carpets were beaten and aired in the tiny garden, hangings had to be washed irrespective of texture, and every inch of paint was scrubbed. Shortly she was able to contemplate a completely purified dwelling.

Limp and irritable from unaccustomed toil, Mary Mudge viewed their handiwork. "Why you must take so much trouble is a riddle; you've spoilt more than you've improved, and for all our sweat we've not moved a peck of dirt."

"Takes a lot of filth to amount to anything in the sight of a Londoner," Emily retorted. "What with blow-flies bred in privies and stables to crawl over our victuals, and burial-grounds that would

shock country folk, 'tis a wonder we don't suffer more ills than we do."

Mary eyed with perverse satisfaction the flies buzzing in the kitchen. "I don't see fewer blue-bottles."

"Maybe not, but the eggs aren't hatching in corners, and of other vermin there's none." Emily's voice, which began triumphantly, trailed off as her glance fell on her friend's head. "Now we've done so much you might finish by washing your hair in something strong, like vinegar."

"I knew a young 'oman as washed her hair to be married, and she died before she was wed," Mary gloomily returned.

"I wash my hair every week, as well you know."

"All depends on what you're used to; anyways, I won't wash mine, not if I leaves you over it."

Defeated, Emily reverted to more satisfactory topics. "Everywhere smells clean, and nobody would guess that gentlemen had soaked themselves here in wines and spirits. I've only got rid of the fumes in time, for the smell would have made my mother question."

"Aren't you telling her about Sir Harry?"

"Indeed 'twould break her heart if I did."

"How'll she think you keep this house with no gentleman behind you?"

"She knows all about my singing at the Temple of Health, and I'll let her suppose my wages are enough to keep a neat house. Everything has fallen out well; all I need do is to talk careful."

Emily's performances as "Hygeia" were in abeyance, due to the lease of 6 Royal Terrace having expired before alterations could be completed to Dr. Graham's new premises. In hand-bills rained upon the town by running footmen Emily's reappearance was announced at:

"The Temple of Health, Schomberg House.

"To the Nobility, Gentry, and Persons of Learning and Taste.

"On the 1st of June at exactly 8 o'clock in the evening, A GRAND GALA NIGHT when Doctor James Graham will throw open his new palatial premises at Schomberg House, Pall Mall. The CELESTIAL BRILLIANCY of the MEDICO-ELECTRICAL APPARATUS in all the apartments of the Temple WILL BE EXHIBITED BY DOCTOR GRAHAM HIMSELF! The magnificent CELESTIAL STATE BED will be on view!! 'HYGEIA' WILL SING

an ode set to music and SHE WILL POSE IN VARIOUS BEAUTIFUL ATTITUDES!! An ORCHESTRA and a most sweet toned ORGAN will play!! Painting and embellishments of a masterly description depict moving figures on the earth, birds flying and swans gliding on the waters; a fine procession too is seen: village nymphs strewing flowers before priests, brides, bridegrooms, and their attendants, who are all ENTERING THE TEMPLE OF HYMEN, disappear from the delighted eye. ADMISSION BY NIGHT FIVE SHILLINGS, by day two shillings and sixpence."

On the day the Earl of Warwick and his family were expected, Emily and Mary Mudge established themselves in St. James's Square to maintain a vigilant watch upon coaches arriving from the country. It was a sunny, hot morning, and the pond within the railed enclosure provided a welcome illusion of coolness. A pair of wild ducks with a brood of six left long V-shaped ripples as they paddled round and round. Emily and Mary, hanging over the railings, pelted them with crumbs from a stale cake bought from an itinerant baker.

Carrying a glass-fronted show-case which could be propped' on a stick, a ragged Jew pursued the girls and tempted them with trinkets made from Mr. Pinchbeck's new gold; Emily bought a chain for herself and a heart-shaped brooch for Mary Mudge. A tumbler in motley, followed by a couple of boys dancing to tambourines, still further beguiled the tedium of waiting; in the late afternoon a mad dog, chased by men throwing stones, drove the girls to seek shelter in the nearest area. Turmoil had barely subsided when the Earl and Countess of Warwick and their retinue, in two post-coaches and four, entered the square from York Street. Emily, in her excitement, was well to the fore when his Lordship, after lifting out his sons Lord Brooke and Henry Richard, gallantly assisted his lady and Miss Maria Vancouver. The Earl's second wife was a handsome, strapping young woman with creamy skin and bold black eyes; she had a quick, peremptory manner and a decisive carriage. A hoop and a cape concealed that she was five months with child.

The family passed into the house before the Major-domo, the Earl's valet, Mrs. Duggan and an under nurse carrying the baby, alighted from the second coach. Rushing forward, Emily hugged her mother. "Are you quite well, Mam?" she eagerly inquired.

"Yes, indeed, my lamb," Mrs. Duggan responded with affectionate haste. "Come to see me to-morrow morning; and remember, Emý,

by the area steps." Thus admonishing, she descended to the kitchen, pausing only to blow a kiss through the railings.

Shallow black trunks that fitted the coach-roofs were carried in-doors; the coaches drove away, yet still Emily lingered.

Mary Mudge tugged at her sleeve. "Let's go, there's no more to watch."

"There may be. Perhaps My Lady will take her little boy to look at the ducks; anyway, there's more excitement here than at home." As Emily spoke, so her eyes scanned the square in the hope of seeing Mr. Greville coming to pay a ceremonious call upon his elder brother. Turning a deaf ear to Mary's grumblings, she persisted in her perambulations until dusk and a cool wind drove her from the romantic neighbourhood of St. James's.

Excitement kept Emily awake; milkmaids' cries echoed through the streets before she fell asleep. Mary Mudge, unusually indulgent, allowed her to lie long after her usual hour for rising. Eventually she was roused by a band of marrow-bones and cleavers saluting a bride in an adjacent house. Donning a dimity greatcoat over her shift, Emily hurriedly descended to the kitchen, where she found her friend grilling mackerel in a Dutch oven, and examining a letter just delivered.

"Not Sir Harry's writing," Mary announced.

Emily snatched the packet and looked at the address: "'Tis the Earl of Surrey's frank come back from my gamma."

Acting as Dame Kidd's amanuensis, Ann Reynolds informed Emily of her grandmother's good health.

"except for ruematiks which as been cruel all winter but now are mended, the same cannot be sed of Us who are in a poor whay having Buried my sister Lydia Nicoll a fortnite cum sunday of a wasting Fevour and is lik to take off Sofy who is fretting for her Mam and will go the same whay Doctor Thomas ses unless she can have a change of sene and air I suppose you cud not take her with you for a time and we wood send her by the Waggon from Chester as you went ples let me know about this imigit and oblige your loving Gamma and Auntie."

"Indeed there's no reason why we shouldn't have Sophy here, now Sir Harry's away," Emily remarked after reading aloud the letter.

Mary looked dubious. "What's she like?"

"The prettiest little angel you ever saw, with a mop of curls gold as a guinea. I've been away more than a year, so 'tis twelve she must be."

"I wouldn't mind a child," Mary said grudgingly.

"I'd think not indeed, especially if it was to help someone. You're getting selfish, Mary Mudge, and that I can't abide."

Mary took criticism badly, and vented her ill-humour by crashing plates together like cymbals. Leaving her to pick up the bits, Emily returned to her bedroom to get ready for her visit to St. James's Square. She had planned to wear a new gown of lilac-coloured silk and a chip hat mounting three ostrich feathers, but when she put them on she felt dissatisfied and flung the clothes upon the bed. Eventually she chose a simple dress of sprigged muslin and a Leghorn hat.

Plain as was the costume, it caused her mother to exclaim: "You must earn high wages, bach, to afford the same clothes as the Quality. You wear them prettier, I'll not deny; but 'tis to be hoped none of the Family see you, for they'll not be best pleased."

Hugging her mother, Emily answered coaxingly: "Unkind Mam, to scold me for wearing my best to honour you. Indeed, if you mislike my gownd, I'll not don it again, only don't scold, for it breaks my heart."

Mary Duggan indulgently pinched her daughter's cheek. "There's foolish you are to make a to-do about nothing. I don't care what you wear, so it doesn't get us into trouble. 'Tis a mistake to cross the gentry."

They stood together by the fire while Mrs. Duggan stirred a posset for Lord Brooke. Encompassed by the bustle of the kitchen, Emily and her mother conversed in undertones. The chef was boning green geese for a pie; at the dresser chattering kitchen-maids prepared ingredients and garnishing; footmen, tenderly carrying wines in little baskets, walked in procession from the cellars.

"Is the little gentleman stronger?" Emily asked, pondering whether or not to tell of picnics near West Dean Park.

"Keeping his bed, wore out after yesterday's journey. 'Tis an ill wind, for it allows us to sit quiet in the day nursery, where we can talk comfortable."

Happily for Emily's security, his little lordship was asleep and the communicating door closed. She and her mother had the room to themselves. In a low voice Emily summarized her meeting with

Dr. Graham and in dumb-show re-enacted triumphs at the Temple of Health. She described her little house in Hart Street and the portrait for which she had sat to Mr. Romney. Mary Duggan reciprocated with accounts of extensive alterations to Warwick Castle and pleasure-grounds. "'Tis said his Lordship has carried the expenses far beyond his yearly revenue and has difficulty in finding ready money to pay the army of labourers camped in the park. Others believe the Castle is on the brink of prosperity from a soap mine discovered on the estate by Mr. Vancouver."

"I've never heard of soap bubbling from the ground."

"Nor has anyone else, bach, but his Lordship and the queer gentleman who manages the estate."

Mother and daughter had been separated for more than two years, yet an hour's conversation exhausted all they had to tell each other. Then it was that Emily recalled her grandmother's letter. "Three pounds would bring Sophy by the stage and leave something to spare," she remarked. "I'd be a mean wretch not to afford that for one too young and sickly to travel by waggon."

"I'll give you a pound towards it, but 'tis a mint of money for poor folk to spend on travel."

Mary Duggan was a tall, well-built woman of thirty-five with a pleasant, open countenance. Her colouring she had transmitted to her daughter, but the origin of Emily's beauty had to be sought elsewhere. Industrious and capable, she coupled the ready wits of the Welsh with their genius for compromise. If there seemed but two straight paths to follow, left or right, Mary Duggan contrived a middle course which, by devious windings, conducted her unobtrusively to her goal. Like Emily, she was compassionate and willing to sacrifice her own interests when her affections were involved, but differed from her in possessing greater caution and longer vision.

Emily was on the alert, and heard a light carriage draw up long before a bustle downstairs announced an arrival. Her mother rose and put her head through the open window.

"'Tis Mr. Charles's phaeton; he must be coming to see his little Lordship, as the Family are out. Whatever can I do with you, Emy? There's no way for you to run."

"I'll stay where I am!"

"But in those clothes, Emy! You look as fine as Miss Mary Hamilton when she comes from her waiting on the Queen. This is what comes of dressing outside your station!"

For a different reason Emily shared her mother's perturbation. Would Mr. Greville betray her secret when he saw her unexpectedly? Dangerous as was her situation, she would not exchange it for the Prince of Wales's feathers, that she wouldn't. . . .

Mother and daughter silently listened to firm footsteps rapidly ascending the stairs. Their eyes sought the door-knob, waiting for it to turn.

"Stand against the wall, then you mayn't be noticed. . . ."

Instead Emily stepped into the sunlight, which transformed her vivid hair into a glittering halo.

Charles Greville bade Mrs. Duggan good-day and was half across the room before he saw Emily. He started, but quickly recovered composure.

"My daughter, Sir. Her Ladyship gave permission for Emy to sit with me while his little Lordship slept."

This time Mr. Greville betrayed no surprise. Unobserved by her mother, Emily besought him with a pleading glance. He bowed; Emily dropped a graceful curtsy.

Shocked by her daughter's assumption of equality, Mrs. Duggan felt an explanation was required. "Emy's not had the advantage of serving the nobility, sir, but at Hawarden she was in good service with Dr. John Thomas, who married Miss Boydell of the Manor House, niece to Mr. John Boydell, the famous engraver. Mrs. Thomas it was, who, meaning to advantage Emy, got her a situation in Dr. Budd's household. 'Twas a mistake; Emy learnt no good in London."

"But no harm, I'm sure." Charles Greville smiled gravely as he opened the door and disappeared into his nephew's room.

Emily's spirits dropped to zero. Now the meeting was over she realized how greatly she had counted on it. Everything seemed in her favour, yet Mr. Greville had looked on her coolly. . . .

His voice, deep and resonant against Lord Brooke's treble, penetrated the closed door. The sound set Emily's heart thumping unaccountably.

Mrs. Duggan returned to her sewing. "'Tis a pity Mr. Charles doesn't settle," she remarked in an undertone. "A gentleman so handsome and clever could make his choice, but he must wed prudently, being a younger brother. A while ago his name was coupled with a young lady of the Rutland family, but nothing came of it."

Emily's spirits revived. If Mr. Greville were fancy free, a poor girl had as good a chance as any rich heiress. . . . By leaving the house

first and loitering in the square, a lost position might be retrieved. . . .

Unconsciously Mrs. Duggan aided and abetted by glancing at the bracket clock.

"Do you want me to go, Mam?"

"You'd better leave before Mr. Charles walks through, seeing he looked astonished to find you here. But I'll often be able to leave the children with the governess or under-nurse and come to your little house, bach, where we can be private and beholden to no one."

Footmen were laying the table as Emily followed her mother across the hall.

"At the Castle we dine at four o'clock, but in London not until five," said Mrs. Duggan, dodging a lackey carrying a pile of silver plates to the kitchen.

"Is Mr. Charles staying to dinner?"

"My Lady was provoked because he excused himself without giving a reason. Her Ladyship would have everyone under her orders."

In the seclusion of the area, mother and daughter affectionately embraced. "I'd like to hear you sing at the Temple of Health," Mrs. Duggan wistfully observed.

"You shall," Emily recklessly promised as she tripped up the steps.

A young groom slowly drove Mr. Greville's one-horse phaeton round and round the railed pond. It was a stylish vehicle, painted a modest black and drawn by a high-stepping grey; a deed-box lay on the vacant seat.

Emily faced a dilemma. There were four ways by which a carriage might leave the square; a wrong guess would be her undoing. Glancing at the deed-box, she reasoned that a gentleman so encumbered would be going home, and the direct route to Portman Square was by way of King Street. . . .

Stationed at the western side of the pond, Emily feigned interest in the ducks as a cover to vigilance. She had not long to wait; quitting his brother's house, Mr. Greville paused on the step and scanned the square. When she felt his eyes upon her, she left the railings and strolled across the cobbles, a gambler staking fortune on a cast.

"Please God make him come! Make him come!" she whispered.

Emily listened for the rumble and clatter of a carriage, but the thudding of her own heart dominated all other sounds. A familiar prospect confronted her: the dull, flat face of Almack's, punctuated by a line of arched windows, and the equally forbidding façade of Nerot's Hotel revived memories she had no wish to recall. Hope

diminished with every step, and as excitement ebbed, so her heart found quiet. Spent and wretched, she acquiesced to fate.

She had turned into St. James's Street and neared the top, when her incredulous eyes lighted upon Charles Greville rounding the corner in his phaeton. Pulling up, he waited for his servant to leap from the rumble before himself descending in a leisurely fashion.

Falling into step beside Emily, he said: "It was a disappointment to me that you were gone when I left my nephew's room, though I don't deny my position was an awkward one."

"Indeed I'm grateful you did not betray me, for Mam knows nothing of Sir Harry or of my ever leaving London. I've let her believe I earn enough singing and posing at the Temple of Health to keep my little house in Hart Street."

"You can depend upon my not mentioning *to any person* affairs that must be your own, yet I cannot act as your friend without advising you to consider before keeping your mother in ignorance. Should your connexion with Sir Harry become public, the news would distress her more than to be acquainted with the fact by yourself."

"Sir Harry'll be abroad all summer, so there's no call for Mam to hear of him."

"But, my dear girl, you are too beautiful to remain long without a protector, and if 'twere not Sir Harry, 'twould be another. Therefore how wise to avow your manner of life, and if you avoid every appearance of giddiness and conduct yourself with proper pride, there is no reason why you should not be respected."

Emily listened entranced to Mr. Greville's charming voice offering advice in pedantic language. The view he expressed was strange, and agreeably lenient to transgressors, but if such a clever gentleman believed virtue could be kept when innocence was lost, it was so, and she would regulate her conduct accordingly. . . .

"I'll not deny I have been wild and thoughtless, but my worst sins have been follies, and if the time could come again I would act different." Impressionable by nature, Emily unconsciously adapted herself to Greville's character, and believed all she said.

"It gives me infinite pleasure that you face life so reasonably. Half the gloom with which we surround ourselves comes from lamenting errors instead of constructing plans for improvement."

"Indeed I will do all I can to avoid giddiness and gain respect." Tears of gratitude spangled Emily's long lashes.

"I trusted to the sincerity of your disposition to take my hint in

good part," Greville returned in complacent tones. "Now we'll leave one serious matter for another - may I drive you home?"

Emily's answer was a radiant smile. After helping her into the phaeton and climbing in beside her, Greville prudently dismissed his groom. They drove down St. James's Street at a rattling pace, but not too fast to prevent passers-by observing Emily's beauty and the elegance of her esquire. Admiring glances followed them, and as they passed the 'Thatched House Tavern' a number of gentlemen, dining upstairs, rushed out upon the flat roof of Rowland's peruke shop to obtain a better view. To be the butt of curiosity was extremely offensive to Greville; he gave Emily a sharp look, suspecting her of courting attention. Her modest demeanour mellowed his expression.

In Pall Mall he pointed out Lord George Germain's house, and Dodsley's book shop at the sign of the Tully's Head. Not to be outdone, Emily drew attention to Schomberg House, wherein she was to appear as Hygeia four nights hence, an introduction rendered unnecessary by a display of Graham's bold red placards.

"An establishment which cannot be welcomed by Gainsborough or by Mr. Christy, whose premises adjoin," Charles Greville dryly commented.

"'Twill bring some life to the place. On assembly nights, when we were in the Adelphi, Adam Street was so blocked with coaches and chairs that a footman had to be posted in the Strand to pacify the gentry."

"I'm astonished that Sir Harry permits his girl to exhibit herself in such a raree-show."

Eager to recapture Mr. Greville's esteem, Emily directed the conversation into more agreeable channels; this she attempted diffidently, due to awe and admiration. Happily her escort needed no more encouragement to discourse upon himself than an ordinary man, and they arrived at Hart Street on mutually appreciative terms.

Having conceived a bold plan of inviting Charles Greville to dinner, she was provoked to find her house empty and the door-key under the scraper.

"You've missed your dinner for me, so 'tis only right to have the chance to repay. But contented you must be with little, for my maid's gone to the theatre and God knows what's in the larder. All I can promise is an omelette, a flummery, and good wine."

"A king could ask no better."

While Mr. Greville drove his phaeton to the stables of the 'Hum-mums' in Covent Garden, Emily posted down to her kitchen. The fire was almost out, the kettle was empty, the only food prepared was a dish of soused mackerel still warm in the oven. Losing no time, she energetically worked the bellows, and had a tongue of flame roaring up the chimney when her guest returned. Flushed by exertion, she met him at the front door.

"'Twill be as I promised, but no better, for can you believe it? that thoughtless maid of mine went off without thinking of the fire or how we was to get anything to eat this night. But 'tis no matter, because I've coaxed a roaring flame which, when it steadies, will cook as light an omelette as any you've tasted."

During her absence Emily was at a loss how to amuse her guest, until she recollected a portfolio of sketches executed by Mr. Entwistle when on the Grand Tour and left behind because of their tender associations. Her thought was a happy one, for on returning to the parlour she found Mr. Greville had propped along the chimney-piece pictures of Rome and Naples and was inspecting them with the thoroughness of a connoisseur.

"This amateur draws well, but lacks an eye for colour. Anyone knowing the value of Italian atmosphere and glow of light must miss both in these cold northern tones."

"Have you been to Italy?" Emily asked with respectful eagerness.

"More than once, due to my good fortune in being a nephew of the British Minister at Naples. Sir William Hamilton's favour with the King and Queen is great; on my visits I am accorded very preferential treatment."

"Sir Harry spent some time in Rome and at Naples; he brought home many pictures."

"I should not have imagined Sir Harry to be much bit by *virtù*, nor sufficiently a connoisseur to know an old master from a modern copy."

To Emily's satisfaction her guest ate the omelette with relish and accepted a second helping. "I've not tasted a better in Italy, where even in the most primitive *albergo* one may be sure of a perfect *frittata*."

A hastily concocted flummery, pleasing equally well, terminated Emily's anxiety and left her tranquil to enjoy the remainder of the evening. The heat of the day was spent; mellow sunlight lit the narrow street and drew long shadows on the cobbles. Through the open windows drifted the air of London, odorous of dust, horse

dung and the powerful stench of privies. Flies droned lazily in and out; dogs had ceased scavenging and slept in the gutters; painted ladies who had rested all day emerged in feathers and prodigious hoops.

Charles Greville appreciatively sipped Sir Harry's port. The good wine broke down his reserve, and he was soon discoursing upon his collection as if he had for a listener a member of the Society of Antiquaries.

"I wish I could persuade my uncle to take advantage for me of his opportunities to procure Vesuvian crystals, which have become scarce since the Fossa Grande filled up in 1767. He has more than a little of the Nimrod about him, to the prejudice of either works of art or nature which present themselves to his observation."

"Indeed it may be that the poor gentleman hasn't the understanding for such things," Emily sagaciously remarked.

Greville looked at her with less approbation. "Sir William Hamilton is one of our most noted archæologists, and the British Museum is indebted to him for a comprehensive collection of minerals."

Emily hung her head, her colour coming and going. "You make me ashamed of my ignorance, yet if I'd had the luck of a good education, what a clever woman I might have been!"

"By intelligent application you can surpass a stupid girl more fortunately situated."

"Oh, Mr. Greville, if only I knew how and where to learn about crystals and works of art, I would study them morning, noon and night, indeed I would!"

He smiled gravely, a sad, indulgent smile that Emily found irresistible. "One day I will take you to see the marbles and Etruscan vases in the Hamiltonian collection at the Museum."

"Were they given by Sir Will'um?" she asked in awed tones.

"Yes, and I really grudge some of the marbles, especially a fine bust of Hercules, not felt by the trustees."

Darkness invaded the close, small room. Sitting on a stool by the chimney-piece, Emily gazed in admiration at Greville's aristocratic head silhouetted against the window. Excited speculations filled her mind: would he grasp his pleasure as did other men? or would he plead romantically as actors did in plays? Keyed up for a crisis, she nearly screamed when minutes passed and no vibration disturbed the even tones of his voice. He spoke of Robert Fulke Greville, who lived

with him in Portman Square, and discussed a royal favour just conferred.

"My brother's appointment as Equerry to His Majesty is all the more flattering as it was made without any application from him or his friends."

Emily had to swallow before she could respond with suitable calm: "The King, if he acted right, should first offer the post to you, as the elder."

"I feel no envy, Emily, and such appointments are reserved for officers in His Majesty's army. My brother is a Lieut.-Colonel in the 10th Dragoons."

Rising, Emily transported a Dresden china candlestick from chimney-piece to table, and fumbled ineffectually with a tinder-box.

"Let me," said Greville, and deftly lit the three wax candles.

Emily trembled so violently that she feared he must notice. When she resigned the tinder-box, their hands had touched—a contact sufficient to fire the passions of her lovers, yet Mr. Greville had turned away to lift his dispatch-box from the floor. . . . Depression, deeper and more acute than anything she had experienced, deprived her of power to act. . . . In another moment he would be gone. Good God! What had come over Emy Lyon that she allowed happiness to float away like thistledown?

"Oh, what a charming day it's been; I don't know what to say to thank you in words kind enough."

"But, my dear Emily, the kindness is yours in according me such delightful hospitality." Although Greville protested, Emily had struck the right note. Accustomed to be sought after as a handsome bachelor, it was only fitting that a girl of the town should be humbly appreciative.

"Then you'll come again, dear Mr. Greville? Next time, if you give me warning, I'll offer you a better dinner, but I cannot give you a warmer welcome."

They stood in the narrow, dark passage, stuffy from the hot sunshine that all afternoon had streamed through the fanlight. Reluctant to open the door, Emily pretended to fumble for the latch, and in so doing contrived to lean her warm breast against Greville's hand. The ruse succeeded; instantly his arms were round her waist and his mouth pressed close upon her full, moist lips. So they remained a long while, speechless and quiet save for the searching hunger of their kisses. A footfall in the street recalled Greville to his natural caution.

"Dear, distracting Emily," he whispered as he turned her adroitly into the hollow of his arm.

Emily stirred and sighed as if awakened from a trance. "I love you, I love you," she breathed.

His lips brushed her hair in a swift caress. "You're half asleep! What would your mother say to me for keeping you from your bed?"

Somehow she had slipped from his arms and stood alone, swaying slightly, like a person balancing on a narrow parapet. Meanwhile he had found the latch and was opening the door. Feeling the cooler air, Emily put out her hand and held his arm. "Don't go, please don't go, or if you must, promise to come again. Indeed I shall die if I don't see you soon, for you have awakened something in me that belongs to you, only to you."

Kissing her lightly, he pushed her aside. "Foolish Emily, of course I shall come again. Now you must to your beauty sleep. Sweet dreams, dear girl, and think of me!" Embracing her shoulders, he administered a brotherly hug and sped from the door.

Standing on the step, Emily listened to his footsteps growing fainter and fainter. The street was unlighted save for a feeble lamp glimmering at the cross street from Covent Garden to Long Acre. Above the chimney-pots a strip of sky showed like a luminous grey ribbon; here and there a window revealed the steady glow from a shaded rush-light or moving radiance from a carried candle. Hot scents of the town weighted the night air with a rich tang of decomposing matter; now and again a shout sounded from Covent Garden or a drunken woman screamed and cursed as she was ejected from a tavern.

Restoring the key to its hiding-place under the scraper, Emily closed the front door and slowly betook herself to bed. Through the dark hours she lay in a beatitude 'twixt sleeping and waking. Intimate pictures of herself and Greville were briefly revealed like scenes disclosed through rolling mists—impressions that left her exalted and strangely severed from her normal self.

Always an early riser, she got up when the clouds were still ruffled by the pink glow of sunrise. After dressing, she went to the tin box wherein Sir Harry had deposited forty pounds to defray household expenses until his return. Extracting three of Messrs. Drummond's bank-notes, Emily carefully cut each in two, and, retaining the left halves, folded the others inside a letter written on one of the Earl of Surrey's franked papers, addressed to Mrs. Ann Reynolds at

Hawarden. In three days she intended to dispatch another packet, and, if both arrived safely, the bank-notes, re-joined, would pay Sophy Nichol's coach fare from Chester.

Mary Mudge was still abed when Emily set out for the post office in Lombard Street, and, from her dishevelled aspect, appeared but lately risen when Emily returned some two hours later. Coming home through the market, Emily had bought a brace of ducklings and a peck of green hasteds to serve with them. Depositing her purchases on the kitchen table, she stared critically at her handmaiden.

"You look no better than a slut from St. Giles's," she remarked scathingly, "and how I'm to explain you to my mother is more than I can think!"

"There's no cause for you to, I can speak for myself!"

"'Twill take more than a glib tongue to make her agree you're a proper maid for a neat house."

At noon Emily's premonition was verified, when Mary Duggan drove up in a hackney-coach, prepared to spend the rest of the day with her daughter. After docking twopence off the fare because of the vehicle's dirty condition, the competent Welshwoman came indoors and took a swift survey.

"A nice genteel little place," she acknowledged as she climbed the curving stairs, "but the decorations seem foreign to my eye."

"I got them second-hand from a German girl," Emily admitted.

While Mrs. Duggan assumed an immense goffered cap, she glanced hither and thither. Admiring everything, she appeared in no wise astonished at the luxuriance of the gilded bed that dominated Emily's room. "'Tis nice to see something modern and fashionable after the old stuff at the castle. A lot of our furniture goes back to 1621 and belonged to the first Lord, Sir Fulke, who was stabbed to death in Brooke House, Holborn."

"I'm more bit by *vir-vir-virtù*," Emily announced in romantic imitation of Charles Greville.

Mrs. Duggan appeared not to hear, her attention being arrested by the number of sleek flies that buzzed in the bedroom. "You should smear treacle on a strip of paper and lay it inside the window. There must be dirt near to attract so many. Take me to your kitchen, Emy, and I'll have a look round."

After sweeping Mary Mudge with a comprehensive glance, Mrs. Duggan ignored her. Rolling up her sleeves and pinning her skirt inside out, she embarked on a survey that revealed humiliating irregu-

larities. Cheese rinds and orange peel preserved in unseemly places, a piece of meat forgotten on a top shelf and now an object of lively animation, Miss Mudge's soiled stockings in the salt box.

Emily was nearly in tears. "Indeed, Mam, all this has happened in the last five days, for the house was cleaned from top to bottom less than a week ago." Turning upon Mary Mudge, she stabbed her with an angry look: "How dare you shame me, you heartless girl? Don't you remember I warned you how particular my mother was?"

Sullenly basting a duckling, Mary responded without turning her head. "If she's so particular I'm surprised she comes here, for there's many females as wouldn't—no, not if you was to ask them on your bended knees."

Mrs. Duggan released her skirt, and it fell into place with a heavy ss-sh. "Come along, Emy," she said; "I don't bandy words with insolent wenches."

So accustomed was Mrs. Duggan to kitchen friction, that the incident left her unruffled. Ensconced in the ornately decorated parlour, she encouraged Emily to talk of the Temple of Health and to display herself in the attitudes assumed within the illuminated gilt frame. The praise she accorded uplifted Emily beyond the limits of caution, and she found herself embarking on dangerous statements. Happily every discrepancy was unnoticed, and by the time they had eaten their dinner Emily's confidence was so well established that she was emboldened to exhibit some of her best gowns, and a new riding-habit made by the Court tailor.

After Mrs. Duggan had admired each article, she said quietly, and without looking up: "What is the name of the gentleman who is so generous?"

Dismay bereft Emily of speech; the surprise on her lovely face made her mother laugh. "*Duwch*, girl, there's simple you are to suppose I'd be a gudgeon. How could you earn enough from songs and attitudes to keep this house and buy fine clothes?"

Emily hung her head, and her finger traced the carving on the chimney-piece. "God knows I didn't wish to deceive, but I thought you'd be shocked, not knowing the wickedness of London ways. Indeed I couldn't bear reproach, seeing I've no other means to live."

"I should have been shocked—when I lived countrified."

"I couldn't think of loving any but a gentleman now!"

"'Tisn't likely one would wed you, but if you act wisely you can do as well without a ring as with one." Mrs. Duggan contemplatively

took a pinch of snuff before resuming: "Take your mother's word for it, girl, there's nothing special about a ring, though there's many a married woman as'll try to make you believe there is. You can be just as good and useful living free with a gentleman as if you'd been ringed in church; I've tried both ways, and I know!"

Emily, nonplussed by sentiments utterly contrary to her expectations, found herself arguing on the side of wedlock: "Only maids and married women can be virtuous!"

"'Tis the way you behave, and not a parson's blessing, that makes you respectable."

"That's what Mr. Greville said, only in finer words."

Mrs. Duggan's attention was arrested. "Now what do you know about Mr. Charles? I thought there was something afoot when you met him yesterday. You know how much I love you, don't you, bach? 'Twould break my heart if you managed foolishly."

"Oh, Mam, I haven't a thought but of him; and indeed if I can't make him love me, I believe I shall die!"

"Tut, Emy, think not of him! He'll have to mend his fortune with a rich marriage, and he's not one to keep a mistress and a wife, as many do."

"I'd work for him so his money 'ud go far!"

"Don't act foolish, Emy! Be true to the gentleman who is keeping you so comfortable."

"If you saw Sir Harry you'd never tell me to stay with him if I could go to Mr. Greville."

"Mr. Charles is thirty-three, bach, and an experienced gentleman. One of our footmen, who acted as body-servant to him on the Grand Tour, says he began his love affairs at twenty with a Madame Tschudi at Naples. Then there was that Emily Coventry or Bertie, or whatever she calls herself, and you may depend on it, many others unknown to me. Put him from your mind, Emy, for Mr. Charles has come to a time when a gentleman thinks only of settling."

Emotions, according to popular belief, act upon the heart; Emily's had settled in her stomach, which felt heavy as lead. In her infatuation she had attributed to Greville the chastity of an ascetic, and pictured herself as the woman to awaken his passion. Far from being his first mistress, it now seemed unlikely she could even hope to be his last. . . . Beneath the weight of despair, her knees gave way; sinking to the floor she buried her face in her mother's lap and wept.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EMILY'S spirits were sustained by a belief that Charles Greville would come to witness her performance at the opening of the new Temple of Health. The rooms at Schomberg House were larger and better adapted for public assemblies than the elegantly proportioned apartments in Adelphi Terrace. A gallery encircled the concert hall, large enough to accommodate an organ and orchestra. There were stained-glass windows to throw subdued lights upon an immense plaster statue of Fecundity holding her cornucopia and surrounded by reclining children. Embowered amid growing flowers, a fountain played under an "electrical celestial glory." Pictures of Apollo, Ulysses, Deucalion, Hadrian and Alfred the Great were tastefully disposed between tall mirrors. Hygeia, accommodated in a specially constructed niche built high in the wall, was reached by a ladder slanting from a pantry where refreshments were prepared. Black velvet curtains, pulled aside, revealed Emily illuminated by the glow from red fairy lamps artfully concealed within a small proscenium. Elevated as she was above the heads of the audience, the haze from a profusion of candle-flames obscured her vision; faces appeared featureless as ivory counters. Unable to identify any individual, she sang to each blurred disc as the possible visage of Greville, putting her heart so ardently into her voice that she was accorded an ovation exceeding any she had received in the Adelphi.

Hope was dispelled the instant Dr. Graham conducted her among his guests. No face bore the faintest resemblance to the proud, intellectual countenance of Charles Greville.

After this disappointment Emily vacillated between optimism and deep despondency. Appetite failed, sleep forsook her, tears were ever ready to fall from her lovely eyes. Not even the arrival of Sophy Nichol, pale and wan after two days' coach-sickness, roused Emily from her troubles. She wrote letters and tore them up, and every time

she went to sit to Mr. Romney she ordered the coach to make a detour through Portman Square. Once she saw Robert Fulke Greville leave the house and mount his horse, but never a glimpse did she get of Charles.

The artist was greatly perturbed at the change in Emily, and his sympathy soon caused her to unburden her heart. "Indeed I don't know what's come over me," she confessed. "Me that's never lost a wink for any man, and now to lie tossing all night through! I wouldn't suffer so at being scorned if he'd never loved another woman. But my mother says there's been a mort of them, beginning with an Italian creature and ending with a wretch called Emily Bertie."

Mr. Romney started and glanced at a finished three-quarter portrait of a lovely animated young woman with a roguish face. Nodding at it he said: "That's Emily Bertie."

Springing to her feet, Emily ran to the picture and cast herself on her knees before it. She stared at the face for a long time. "I wish that picture was my only rival," she said in stifled tones. "I have always known I was not destined to be happy. But I won't complain. If he loves another Emily, I must make the best of my lot!" At the sound of her own noble words she wept afresh, lying flat on the floor in the abandoned attitude of a child.

The artist knelt beside her and stroked her hair, his fine, sensitive face twisted by the reflection of her grief. "Don't cry, Emily, don't cry. The pain will wear off, cruel as it seems to say so. Hearts don't break: they only crack, and time conceals the scar."

"Oh, but he's so handsome and noble to look at! If you saw him you'd wish to paint him—I know you would. He's proud and distant as a statue on a tomb."

The artist administered an indulgent pat. "Come, Emily, even love cannot transform young Mr. Pott into a saint!"

"You talk foolish, because I've never heard of Mr. Pott!"

Bewilderment made Mr. Romney look so comical that Emily was obliged to laugh.

"But, child, 'tis the son of Percival Pott the surgeon who has commissioned the picture of Emily Bertie, and it goes out to the East Indies with them when they're married."

Exuberant in her joy as in her grief, Emily flung her arms round the artist's neck. "Oh, kind Mr. Romney, I can never thank you for easing my poor, distracted heart. Maybe 'twas all a mistake about Mr. Greville knowing the other Emily."

Raising his eyebrows and pulling a rueful face, George Romney extricated himself from Emily's embrace. "Though a man be forty-six, he still has passions, Emily, and I'll not answer for mine if ye try them too hard."

"I'm sorry," she answered miserably.

Picking up his palette, he crossed to a half-finished portrait and applied himself to filling in the background, a change of position that doubtless accounted for the muffled tones of his voice: "About five years ago, Emily Coventry, as she was then called, went, at Mr. Greville's request, to sit to Sir Joshua Reynolds for a whole-length portrait and paid half his fee—seventy-five guineas. Finding herself unable to pay any more, she relinquished the portrait, which lay in Sir Joshua's gallery until the beginning of this year, when he finished it as a picture of Thais for the Exhibition."

"Had Mr. Greville been fond, he would have bought the portrait for himself," Emily sagaciously argued.

"He has—in the character of Thais. 'Tis a sarcastic allusion to her private life, but it makes a fine picture, worthy to hang beside Corregio's Venus, which Mr. Greville has been trying to sell these many years for Sir William Hamilton."

That bartering should exist among the gentry shocked Emily profoundly; hoping to be reassured she said: "Not Mr. Charles Greville?"

"Yes, Mr. Greville seeks among the English nobility purchasers for the *virtù* Sir William buys in Naples. 'Tis not a bad thing for art that such eminent connoisseurs endeavour to cultivate British taste."

Emily recalled the conversation to the subject that obsessed: "Do you think I may take the place of the other Emily?"

Her inquiry deflected Mr. Romney's attention from a pannikin of paint he was mixing, which, jerking from his fingers, bespattered his smock with carmine. The mishap had an adverse effect on his temper, and for the remainder of the hour they spent together he punished Emily by taciturnity, despite his obligation to her for clearing up the mess.

That Charles Greville was not too proud to associate with a girl of the town shattered Emily's illusions; but while mourning her idol's broken pedestal, she welcomed a revelation that rendered him accessible. What Emily Coventry had lost, Emily Lyon would win! . . .

Walking home by way of Oxford Street and Soho, she regarded the conquest as good as made, an exalted mood that survived several un-

eventful days before it languished. Slowly she reverted to despair. Need of a confidant drove her to St. James's Square, where she sought comfort in her mother's arms.

"Put Mr. Charles from your mind," the sensible woman advised, "for he has no thought of you. Love your own kind gentleman, who has given you so much and trusts you to be true."

Emily's thoughts travelled to Sir Harry and veered away.

"Then there's poor, motherless Sophy—why can't you take pleasure in her? She looks that peaked and nervous, it cuts my heart. If you don't mean to act loving, you should have left her at Hawarden with my sister, Ann Reynolds."

Thus reproached, Emily tried to make amends. Sophy Nichol was a lovely, fragile child endowed with grace and charm. When congenially situated she could be frolicsome and bold; like Emily, she reacted to every influence. Reflecting her cousin's mood, the child gave it a twist of naughtiness and perversity; sharp words and slaps were frequent between them; Emily's kind intentions wore thin beneath the friction. As a sop to conscience she brought Sophy pretty and expensive clothes, paying for them out of the fund left by Sir Harry. The sum appeared so large that the habit grew of dipping into the tin box. The dwindling packet of bank-notes provided boat excursions to Greenwich, and coach jaunts to the spas which abounded within easy access of London, where Emily and her mother extravagantly drank tea in rustic arbours while watching the languid Sophy making daisy-chains. As the month advanced without a sign from Greville, Emily became utterly reckless. If he cared naught for her, she'd go to the devil, so she would. . . .

Firmly bent on her own ruin, she solemnly decanted a bottle of Sir Harry's vintage port and drank it to the dregs. The effect was not as she anticipated, no exhilaration of wickedness resulted. Like a log she fell across her bed, to be roused the following noon to reluctant consciousness.

"I've never been so sick," she moaned as Mary roughly ministered.

"Serves you right—drinking like a gentleman! You're going to the bad, Emy; seems you lose your way without a man to guide you. Some females are like that: can't be themselves *for* themselves, if you understand me."

Happily for Emily, the day was a Sunday, and she had no duties at Schomberg House. In the late afternoon she dressed and cautiously shuffled downstairs. She had the place to herself, Mary and Ephraim

having taken Sophy to the strawberry gardens at Marylebone. Feeling more dead than alive, she lay down on the hard sofa in the parlour. Her thoughts were muddled and she was actuated by sulky resentment. Ideas for revenge flickered through her mind, but so elusively that she could not co-ordinate them into a plan or focus them upon an individual. All she remembered was that Emy Lyon had been scorned—Emy Lyon who only had to throw her handkerchief to capture the Prince of Wales. . . .

She fell into an uneasy doze, which lasted until she was disturbed by an impression of being watched. Looking across at the window, she saw a face, the face of Captain Willett Payne surmounted by one of the new round hats favoured by gentlemen for riding and driving. Believing herself to be dreaming, she rubbed her eyes and looked again. Captain Payne mouthed a greeting, pointed to the door, and abruptly sank from view. The clatter of his shoes on the area flags assured Emily of his reality. Rising, she stumbled to the door, threw it open, and faced the sea officer leaning nonchalantly against the jamb.

"My God, what a fright you gave me! I thought you was at sea."

"No, my pretty, nor likely to be this age. Is that the best welcome you've got for me?"

"Sir Harry said you'd won your cause against the Portuguese, and been posted to another ship."

"The first is fact, the last only a hope." Pushing her into the house, he shut the door. Still drowsy and uncertain of herself, Emily loitered back to the parlour. Overtaking her before she regained the sofa, Captain Payne swung her into his arms. "Have ye given your heart to Fetherstone that ye have none for me?"

"Sir Harry's been in Hanover this month past."

"O-ho! Then what have you been up to, my pretty wanton?"

Emily looked unwillingly into his great black eyes. "I've done naught but drink a bottle of old Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh's port wine, and 'tis hazy it's made me."

"At one sitting? And what for?"

"I wanted to go to the devil, and as that's the way gentlemen always choose, I thought 'twould be pleasant."

Captain Payne laughed. "And it wasn't? But why did you want to find a new way to perdition when you've already walked a pretty step along the usual road?"

Emily hung her head and would not answer.

"Never mind, my pretty, we'll travel the way we know, and take the devil with us as bedfellow!" Slipping his hand inside her low-cut bodice, he caressed her breasts with supple, questing fingers. Emily acquiesced, partly through inertia, partly because his influence was strong as ever. Presently, to a running monologue of gay inconsequence, she found herself gently urged from the parlour and up the stairs, "Did you notice my round hat, Emy? 'Tis the latest thing, and I got it only yesterday from Lock's, but whether it becomes me or not is another matter. Truth to tell, I was so taken with one my cousin Peter brought back with him from Cambridge, that I couldn't rest till I had its counterpart."

"How can you copy your cousin's hat when you told me your people lived in St. Christopher?"

"Ease away there! Ease away!" Captain Payne murmured as he negotiated the bend of the stairs and brought Emily triumphantly to the door of her bedroom. "I told you truth, pretty doubter. My near relations do live in St. Kitts, but I've kindred here, and glad I am of it, for I'd have had a weary time on half pay with nowhere to go. As 'tis I can make my home with Sir Gillies Payne in Bedfordshire, who will give me as much riding and fishing as I please while he lives, which I fear won't be long."

Captain Payne bolted the door and airily took possession of the bedroom. Pulling open a drawer, he found a modish riding-coat of Sir Harry's and put it on. It nearly reached the floor, and the sleeves were so long that his hands were engulfed. Strutting up and down, he mimicked his friend's pompous delivery: "*This redingote pour la chasse incommodes me vastly, upon my soul 'tis no fitting habillement for le coucher d'amour.*"

At first Emily giggled at his antics, but soon her thoughts became more seriously engaged. Though not yet able to think clearly as her wont, she was alert to the mortal injury she was about to inflict upon a new shy self that had come to birth with her love for Charles Greville. Of yore, when yielding to passion, her heart had slumbered; now it was awake, and rendered her a conscious traitor. Recklessly she told herself she did not care; if Mr. Greville scorned her, there were others who did not, and so she'd show him. . . .

Dusk was seeping into the room when Captain Payne released her from his arms. The half-light revealed the sailor's curving mouth, square chin and prominent dark eyes under thick black brows; a face curious rather than handsome, distinguished by a bold expression that

had first attracted Emily. Memories of mad frolics and laughter enjoyed together made her turn to him for friendly comfort.

"Do gentlemen often kiss girls in a loving way, yet not come back?" she wistfully inquired.

Thinking she referred to himself, his response was indulgent: "A man returns to a wench until she exhausts his curiosity; only a wife can keep a fellow shackled after his interest has fled."

"But does interest flame and die all of a minute?"

"Not unless the fire is smothered by over-tending. But cheer up, my lass, 'twill be a full due before I cease to favour you."

Deeming it injudicious to pursue her inquiries, Emily lay quietly watching her lover re-powdering his hair with Sir Harry's large swansdown puff.

In pursuance of her reckless policy, Emily agreed that Captain Payne should remove from 'Limmer's' to Hart Street, an arrangement that shocked Mary Mudge until a couple of guineas changed hands.

"'Twill only be for a few days," the sailor cheerfully observed. "I want to be back at Tempsford for the haymaking; a rural experience that's never come my way. I'll not be gone long, and you can count on my visits until I'm posted."

As Captain Payne had brought his *tonish* phaeton to town, Emily had no difficulty in persuading him to drive her in the park and through the fashionable squares. Her unavowed object of showing herself with a beau to Charles Greville did not immediately materialize, but she was seen by several of Sir Harry's acquaintances, and got the worst of an encounter with West Indian friends of Captain Payne's.

Emily wore a new pale blue tabby and an enormous hat built up behind on a be-ribboned bandeau which caused crown and brim to rise vertically from her face—the very latest fashion. To her modish appearance might be ascribed Mrs. Nisbet's aggressive reception of the introduction.

"Well, Fanny!" Captain Payne jovially remarked. "I hear ye are now a bright star in the ecclesiastical firmament of Salisbury, transferred thither by Josiah suffering a sunstroke in Nevis that requires the colder half of the hemisphere."

Dr. Nisbet, who was considerably older than his wife, evinced no interest in an unexpected meeting with a neighbour three thousand miles from home. Grimacing at a fantastic vision high above the

tree-tops, he was oblivious alike of his surroundings and the curiosity aroused by his crazy demeanour. He was tall, gaunt and sallow, he had flexible, bushy eyebrows and coarse, uncurled red hair that he wore loosely tied with a bit of greasy shalloon. His clothes were too large, his waistcoat, cravat and stockings were twisted awry as if he had taken no part in putting them on.

"Something had to be done for Jo," Frances Nisbet drawled, with her shoulder turned to Emily, "so we came to town to consult Dr. Willis. As he advises against our remaining, we shall post back to Salisbury on Friday."

"That will give us time to see something of ye. Dine with us to-morrow; Emy here has a neat house at No. 7 Hart Street, and she's as fine a cook as ever you met."

"I don't meet cooks, neither do I accept hospitality from a stranger," Mrs. Nisbet coldly responded, as her glance raked Emily disparagingly.

Although Emily was elevated on the high seat of the phaeton, and wore clothes infinitely superior to Frances Nisbet's rush hat and limp, ill-fitting cotton gown, she was no match for the hostile brown eyes that surveyed her. At eighteen, William Woolward's only daughter could cope with any wanton; she inherited much of the cool judgment which had qualified her father to be Senior Judge of Nevis, and the arrogance peculiar to European families long domiciled among coloured peoples. Frances Nisbet was handsome in a dark, forceful way. She had thick brows that nearly met and a vivid red mouth with full, prominent lips; character centered in her large eyes that could change from indolence to purpose.

Emily rallied her forces. "I'll not ask you to meet my maid," she said, "and you won't be beholden to a stranger, because you'll come to my house as a friend."

Mrs. Nisbet's brows drew together in a heavy black line and her thick lips pursed scornfully. "Thank you, but we shall not put you to that trouble. Captain Payne was mistaken to offer us hospitality dispensed by one in your position, Ma'am, and to force me to the embarrassment of refusing it."

"Damme, Fanny, be civil," Captain Payne explosively retorted; "no sweeter creature than Emy is to be found between here and Charlestown, and I offered you and Josiah a favour that *you* don't deserve. By God, I'm sorry I did!"

In his anger the sea officer lashed his horses so viciously that the

poor beasts leapt forward and nearly precipitated Emily at Frances Nisbet's feet.

"Fanny Woolward always was a priggish bitch," Captain Payne remarked, "and I don't wonder Joseph's gone out of his mind."

"God knows I never wish anyone ill," Emily piously affirmed, "but I hope their post-chaise upsets and tumbles her in a ditch."

"If it does, Fanny will be favoured, as she used to be when crossing between the islands. It can be mighty rough in the narrow strait separating Nevis from St. Kitts, but no matter how tempestuous the sea, Fanny contrived to keep dry, while the rest of us nigh drowned."

"I can't abide a cautious woman." Emily's voice was decisive.

Captain Payne wished to be back at Tempsford Hall by the 1st of July, which necessitated sending his horses ahead to Biggleswade and hiring post-horses from London. Emily, climbing into the phaeton for her last drive, fervently prayed that she would be seen by Charles Greville before it was too late. At her request Captain Payne drove by Pall Mall, up St. James's Street and along Piccadilly to the park. It was noon, the fashionable time to assemble. Carriages, accompanied by running footmen, passed and re-passed each other on the wide drives; effeminate gallants loitered beneath the trees ogling fine ladies who strolled up and down, followed by lackeys carrying long sticks of office.

On approaching or overtaking a vehicle, Emily rapidly appraised the occupants and questioned Captain Payne as to their identity; a ruse to conceal her real interest under a cloak of common curiosity. Observing a concourse of carriages at the entrance to the mineral springs, she had no difficulty in persuading the gregarious sea officer to drive towards the enclosure. Liveried servants ran back and forth carrying dripping jugs; people of fashion sipped as they gossiped; at a small, square reservoir outside the palings, poor men and women stood bathing rheumy eyes.

The press was so great that Captain Payne found no place for his carriage until, espying Lady Betty Delmé's six long-tailed white ponies drawing her phaeton from the rank, he acted smartly and drove ahead of other competitors. Closely encompassed by a chaise and a *vis-à-vis*, the towering high-flyer had the advantage. While inspecting the modish ladies in the *vis-à-vis*, Emily heard Captain Payne accosted from the chaise. The composed, low voice made her heart lose a beat and then race till her blood mantled to her cheeks.

"Well, Payne, I'm sorry you're not yet posted, but there are ru-

mours you will be in the near future, and I've heard the *Enterprise* mentioned more than once as your command."

"Glad to hear it; though, if my memory serves, she's but a sixth-rate."

"The *Enterprise* is a smart 28-gun frigate, built only seven years ago at Deptford," Charles Greville retorted in an official voice.

"Dammé! After commanding the *Artois*, a fellow can't be jubilant over a 28!"

Greville's trenchant silence quelled the sea officer's boisterous caviling. Emily feared that attention might veer to herself. Now that her prayers were granted, she wished them revoked; adieu to hope if Mr. Greville saw her with a lover. . . . Good God! what a fool was Emy Lyon, who, by flaunting, was undone. . . .

Keeping her head averted, she stared at the ladies in the adjacent carriage until they retaliated. Moving a little, she transferred her gaze to the railed enclosure, where, sheltered by drooping branches, gentry sat at rustic tables drinking curative water from cups which a fat old woman filled under a mossy spout.

Rendered inquisitive by Emily's unnatural silence, Captain Payne slipped his hand beneath her chin and turned her face, remarking: "This is lovely Emy Lyon, who beguiles me until I return to duty."

Blushing, Emily bravely confronted Charles Greville. On this occasion he was unable to conceal astonishment; but if his expression betrayed, his tongue remained his suave servant.

"Mrs. Lyon and myself are already acquainted; but she has not yet met my brother, and neither, I think, have you?"

Robert Greville half rose, and bowed as gracefully as an injured foot and the restrictions of a chaise permitted.

"By imbibing the waters of the mineral spring, Colonel Greville hopes to recruit for the exacting duties of his new office and to benefit his foot recently injured," Charles Greville pleasantly continued. "I confess I should be obliged to find a less noxious means of getting myself in order."

Looking curiously from Emily to Greville, Captain Payne urbanely took his cue: "I understand His Majesty's Equerries need to keep in good fettle for the hard duty they are put to. Lord Lothian told me 'tis common for the King to ride fifty miles a day, with relays of horses so he may always go full gallop."

"That would suit you, Emily," Charles Greville remarked, with the obvious intention of drawing her into conversation.

"Indeed there's nothing I'd like so well as a good canter across Marden Down, though 'tis a puzzle how you guessed."

"By the tell-tale sparkle in your eyes. As we have no horse for your pleasure, we must devise an alternative. What say ye, Payne, to driving to Ranelagh Gardens? 'Twill be too early to dine, but we can feast on cakes and chocolate at the Royal Bun House."

Again the sea officer shrewdly glanced, but he answered innocently: "I always favour a frolic, and 'tis a month of Sundays since I ate a Chelsea bun."

Colonel Greville, being a skilled whip, extricated his chaise and was away to Hyde Park Gate before Captain Payne manœuvred his difficult carriage and pair off the uneven turf. Attaining the gravel drive, he was able partly to deflect his attention to Emily.

"What's afoot between you and the Honourable Charles Greville? 'Tis not to be believed that we're all racing to eat buns at Chelsea because he wishes to give a poor sea officer an innocuous treat."

"I met Mr. Greville while I was at Uppark."

"The devil you did! But not as Fetherstone's guest, I'll wager!"

"I met Mr. Greville on the downs," Emily reluctantly confessed. "Sir Harry knows naught of him."

"You'll have a pretty packet to explain when Fetherstone comes back!" the sea officer chuckled; "but perhaps you mean to go to a new establishment? Now look'ee here, my pretty; I'll act your friend in any scheme that appears promising. I feel a real affection for ye, Emy, and there's nothing I'd like better than to see ye established under happy protection, for I know ye well enough to be assured ye'd continue to favour me when opportunity offered."

Emily was quite overwhelmed by such solicitude, and tears trembled on her lashes as she answered: "Indeed I love Mr. Greville so well that I'd willingly let his horse trample on me if it made his path easier."

"Bless ye, Emy! That's the spirit to win him, if I'm a judge of character. Smother your bold, impudent ways and learn to be dutiful and pretty mannered; though, mark you, 'tis another matter if you'll be happy acting contrary to your nature."

"I shan't be happy without him."

"Then I'll help you; but he's not your man, being no warmer than the crystals in his collection. 'Tis a pity Harry Fetherstone could not engage your fancy, for, handled right, you could have had your way with him, even to making an honest woman of you."

Robert Fulke Greville, driving one horse against Captair Payne's pair, by superior skill contrived to lead from Hyde Park Turnpike to the beginning of the Chelsea Water Works. Here the road, branching to encircle the fire-engine shed, enabled the sea officer to forge ahead. Emily derived no pleasure from leading the race, as it deprived her of a romantic view of Greville's powdered queue and braided cocked hat.

Baiting the horses at the 'Nell Gwynne,' they entered the gardens of Ranelagh, and, by Captain Payne's connivance, Emily found herself walking beside the canal alone with Charles Greville. Trembling violently, she was unable to speak and blushed with confusion.

"'Twas a surprise to see you, and with Willett Payne. Have you known him long?" Charles Greville's low voice sounded perfunctory.

"More than a twelvemonth," Emily huskily acknowledged.

"So long? Surely that makes him an older friend than Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh?"

Emily remained silent; they strolled on towards the Chinese Pagoda.

"Well?"

She responded unwillingly: "I met them both together; 'twas the first night of the Papist Riots, and I was lost amid the mob."

"Did they take you to safety?"

"Yes. Leastways we all went off together, but only Captain Payne stayed with me."

Gaining the narrow bridge, Greville stopped, and, leaning his elbows on the rustic woodwork, looked down at his reflection in the oblong strip of water. Shyly, Emily stood beside him.

"Then you are not staunch to Sir Harry; or is it that you were not true to Captain Payne?"

Again Emily was silent.

"Well? Which was it?" probed the cool, measured voice.

"Why must I answer?" Emily cried vehemently, "'tis no business of yours."

"No, 'tis no concern of mine, only I wish to make it clear how we stand. The last time we parted I fancied you were not indifferent to me, but out of consideration to Sir Harry refrained from taking an advantage. If his confidence is already betrayed, there's no reason why I should be scrupulous."

Greville's words, presenting the substance of her hopes in an unpalatable form, shook Emily with conflicting emotions. Humiliated,

yet enamoured, she stood nervously tearing bark from the balustrade.

"I'd be true were I treated fair. But why should a girl be faithful when t'other party is free to love a round dozen at once?"

"Having made a false step, you are hardly in a position to lay down rules of chastity; not that I am one to countenance indiscriminate gallantries."

"If you was to be my friend, all, all, would be different." Emily spoke low and earnestly.

Moving his hand along the rail, Greville clasped Emily's restless fingers. "Dear girl, I am, and will be, your friend; but it is beyond my power to offer permanent provision. In the first place, I cannot afford it; in the second, 'twould keep me out of the world and would ruin me and you. I am frank in this, so that later you may not have cause to reproach me for raising expectations I could not fulfil."

His finely shaped white hand had well-kept filbert nails delicately polished. His touch thrilled Emily, and the thought of his caresses nearly made her swoon. Perfume emanated from his clothes and from the pomade on his hair—a romantic, provocative fragrance that stimulated ecstatic emotion.

"So you love me a little I care not what rules you impose. Indeed, if you do not promise me some comfort I shall die, for I live for you, only for you."

With an indulgent smile, Greville acknowledged Emily's impassioned declaration. Glancing swiftly over the deserted vista, he drew her into his arms and pressed his mouth to her warm, eager lips. The kiss was long, and left Emily giddy and trembling. Composed and urbane, he slipped his hand beneath her elbow and with gentle firmness directed her tottering steps back to the gardens.

A brief search discovered Captain Payne and Colonel Greville seated on a rustic bench on the far side of the Rotunda. The sea officer was graphically describing the attack, in which he had taken part, on Sullivan's Island by Commodore Peter Parker's squadron. So engrossed were the two officers that neither heard Emily and Charles Greville approaching.

"We in the *Bristol* had our spring shot away and swung head to the south'ard, stern to the fort, subjecting us to a dreadful raking fire. Jimmy Saumarez in the *Mercury's* boat replaced the spring three times, but the rebel's fire cleared our quarter-deck. We had forty killed, seventy-one wounded, among them the Commodore, and," Captain Payne added with a low bow, "your obedient servant."

Stepping forward, Charles Greville lightly dropped a hand on the shoulder of each man. "War! war! always war!" he said in rallying tones, "Yet I am in hopes, now we are as much embroiled as possible, that peace is not far distant."

"God! I hope not, until I've had a further thrust at the enemy!"

"Charles is a man of peace," Robert Greville indulgently remarked.

"Faith he is!" acknowledged the sea officer, with an unfavourable glance towards the member of the Board of Admiralty.

At the Royal Bun House, Emily sat between the lover she possessed and the lover she hoped to gain, with Colonel Greville opposite, where he had room to stretch his injured foot. Robert bore little resemblance to his older brother, he was broader, less graceful and lacked the elegance characteristic of Charles. He spoke little, but his manner was kindly attentive, and his reddish face, with its long, acquiline nose, expressed acumen and humour.

The Bun House, a one-storeyed building with a colonnade projecting over the foot-pavement, served casual customers through a sash window at the far end of the shop; the royal family, the nobility and gentry, came inside and sat down at little tables with tops ingeniously inlaid in sea-shells and small stones. Coloured pictures of the King, Queen Charlotte and the five princesses adorned the walls; in a glass case was a silver half-gallon mug presented by Her Majesty to Mrs. Hand, the royal bun-maker. A counter loaded with buns and custard tarts ran across the shop. As a background lofty shelves held such interesting objects as a bottle-conjuror; a model of a British foot-soldier; a piece of a saint's bone in nun's work; a curious flea-trap; the bark of a tree which when drawn out appeared like fine lace; an elf's arrow; a book of Chinese characters and various examples of grotto-work.

Constituting himself host, Charles Greville ordered custard tarts, Chelsea buns and chocolate; whereupon Captain Payne declared himself unable to drink anything but coffee.

"My dear sir, have what you please!" Charles remarked acidly.

Captain Payne pugnaciously set his square chin. "Thank'ee, I will!"

"Much coffee grown in the Caribees?" Colonel Greville hastily interjected.

"Not a bean!"

"'Tis deplorable how little an Englishman knows about the colonies."

Charles addressed Emily in an undertone: "What hours are your own?"

"The only times I count on are those when I sit to Mr. Romney, for I have my cousin, Sophy Nichol, staying with me, and I must for ever be playing games or taking her out walking."

"But the evenings, after you leave the Temple of Health?"

Inadvertently she made a gesture towards Captain Payne.

"I see—those hours are engaged." Greville's voice was cold, and he looked no more at Emily.

The remainder of the meal passed miserably. Crumbs caught in her throat and made her cough; she spilt chocolate down her stomach; over her head her two admirers bickered courteously. When the party rose, Robert Greville was the only serene individual.

"Do ye remain in town till you are posted?" he politely inquired of Captain Payne.

"Faith I don't! I'm off first thing on Saturday to Tempsford Hall, Sir Gillies Payne's place in Bedfordshire. But for Emy's company I'd never spend a summer's day in London."

"You return—when?" Charles Greville inquired.

"When the fancy takes me!" Captain Payne rejoined, with a taunting look.

Driving back to London he took the lead, and as Colonel Greville did not contest it, the chaise was soon left far behind. The phaeton had proceeded as far as the Pimlico salad gardens before Captain Payne glanced quizzically at Emily. "Well, my pretty, are you still as enamoured?"

"You said you'd help me, yet you've done naught but behave disagreeable."

"What black ingratitude! Didn't I leave ye alone together?" he grumbled amiably. "Now I suppose you want me to vacate my bed?"

Emily turned on him furiously. "You're mocking, for you saw Mr. Greville would have none of me. Oh, I am a most miserable girl! Anything I want slips from my grasp."

"Because you work with your heart and not your head, you silly baggage. Throw yourself at a young man and he is surfeited, feign indifference and he follows. With an old fellow 'tis different: the fiercer you woo the more flattered and grateful he will be. These are words of wisdom, Emy, to be borne in mind and put into practice."

"'Tis a beastly world if one must always be play-acting."

"So it is, my pretty, and that's why I give you so much advice. You're a dear, beautiful creature, and when I'm far away fighting the King's enemies 'twill comfort me that I taught you some useful tactics."

During his remaining days in town Captain Payne allowed Emily no leisure for despondency: every moment he occupied with country excursions and visits to playhouses and pleasure-gardens. His high spirits and reckless behaviour were infectious, and she found herself acting as wildly and giddily as she had done during the riots.

"Gad, Emy, 'tis a pleasure to see you restored to your true character, for I vow nature never designed you for a genteel strumpet. I would I could dress you in breeches and take you afloat; given the opportunity, you'd soon distinguish yourself in a gallant way."

His words fired Emily's vivid imagination. Instantly her mind conjured up a picture of a fierce sea battle, with herself, cutlass in hand, boarding the enemy's flagship.

"When you get posted, can you not take me with you?" she eagerly inquired.

"Upon my honour, Emy, I'll think on't."

It was six o'clock of a sunny Saturday morning, and they walked towards the 'Chequer' at Charing Cross, from whence Captain Payne was taking post-horses. Two red-coated porters followed, carrying portmanteaux and a case of a dozen Tokay, a present for Sir Gillies. The rumble of waggon wheels and the galloping of post-boys' horses prevented sustained conversation; the danger of being struck by large baskets that projected behind the stage-coaches kept Emily and her lover constantly alert.

The 'Chequer' was one of the smaller posting-houses, and Captain Payne had to wait for the Bristol coach to go out before ostlers were available to harness a pair of horses to his phaeton. As the inn yard was little more than a passage to the stables, he and Emily elected to wait in the street among loiterers and vendors of travellers' requisites. Accosted by a fruit-seller, he bought six pennyworth of Duke cherries and gave them to Emily. The cherries were tied twelve on a stick; held fanwise they made a coquettish screen for her lovely face.

"Upon my honour you're an exquisite female, and put Lady Jersey and that mob out of countenance. But, my poor dear, not being a countess, your face and temperament combined are like to prove your undoing. Think where your fortune lies before you make a blunder; as I've told you more than once, Harry Fetherstone's an easier man

than Charles Greville, and I shall be sorry if you take your chickens to the wrong market."

"If Mr. Greville would have me, I'd care naught what happened after."

"Then my blessing on you, my pretty, for your ruin will be accomplished before I'm back in town." Kissing her warmly, he moved forward to inspect the stowage of his baggage in a large luggage-basket strapped to the hind carriage of his phaeton. The high-flyer was to be postilion-driven until he took over his own pair at Biggleswade, and a long elf of a groom, dressed in the black-and-yellow livery of the 'Chequer,' straddled the near horse. Springing into his seat, Captain Payne wrapped a rug round his knees and tried to look at ease in his unoccupied and conspicuous position.

"Yo-yo-yo-yoe!" suddenly yelled the postilion as he flicked the off horse. Captain Payne had barely time to wave his hat before he was carried at an incredible speed towards St. Martin's Lane.

Regretting the loss of her high-spirited companion, Emily wandered homeward; as she went, her rosy lips stripped each stick of cherries and vigorously ejected the stones. Jostling through the crowded market, she found herself thrust against a broad, bowed back vaguely familiar; a whiff of gin enlivened her perceptions, and she plucked at the handsomely laced sleeve.

Turning angrily, Charles Macklin glared with hostile, dull eyes. His pendulous lower lip was thrust forward, showing long, yellow teeth; grief distorted his rugged old features and robbed his bearing of its dogged courage. Breathing heavily, he continued to stare inimically.

Momentarily Emily recoiled, but she quickly recovered assurance: "Mr. Macklin, 'tis Emy. You haven't forgotten, surely? Emily Lyon, who was at Mrs. Montizambia's."

"Oh, yes, now I recognize you. You're lovelier than ever, m'dear!" His face softened and became immeasurably older. Taking her hand in his, he stroked it absently. "Maria was fond of you, and it cost her many a tear to cast you from her heart. Just now before I left her she said: 'Tell Emily I want her at my funeral. I shall be there, standing among you; where I am going there is no sin either to forgive or to punish.'" With the back of his wrinkled, veined hand, the actor wiped away tears that rolled down his cheeks. "Maria had cast me off too, m'dear, and lies in lodgings in Bury Street."

"Is she ill?"

"Dying, m'dear, dying."

"Oh, poor Mr. Macklin!" In an access of sympathy Emily threw her arms round his neck and kissed him compassionately. He disengaged himself with the detached forbearance of the old; Emily realized no bridge existed to carry consolation across the gulf of years.

"Yes, I shall be alone, a straggler from last century. 'Tis a cruel fate to live beyond a man's allotted span, and to see one's children taken first. Maria tells me not to fret, because it is the Lord's will."

Tears rolled down Emily's cheeks. "Dear, brave Maria," she murmured.

"Yes, m'dear, she was a good girl, a pious girl, and a pattern to her sex." He spoke of his daughter as of one already gone; a memory transformed by time into a fabulous example.

Such a premature burial of Maria shocked Emily's vigorous youth. "Indeed you must not talk as though she were dead, when she may yet recover. 'Tis no help to her, I'm sure—I shall wish her happy and well."

"Do as 'ee please," he answered fretfully. Having adjusted himself to disaster, he had no stomach for puerile hope. With peevish purpose he began to elbow a path through the crowd, ignoring Emily's outstretched hand.

"Where is Maria lying?" she called.

"I've told 'ee, ye may go to her funerall" he testily shouted. In a moment his bent, heavy figure was lost from view, and only the reek of his daily emollient survived as a pungent record of his presence.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A SHORT holiday with Mr. William Hayley at Eartham caused Mr. Romney to interrupt Emily's sittings, which were not resumed until the Monday after Captain Payne's departure. Entering the studio in Cavendish Square, she discovered the artist rearranging half-finished pictures propped in dusty stacks against the walls. He greeted her warmly, and, clasping her hands, looked intently into her dejected face.

"Not happy yet, Emily?"

"What is there to make me so?" she answered mournfully.

"Fiel Emily. Isn't it enough to be so beautiful that even angels must be envious?"

"What good does it do me? I get naught that I want with it, while girls ugly as Magog obtain love where they will. Good God! if I could exchange my face for a plainer one and get what I want, I'd call it a good bargain."

Turning away, the artist busied himself with a kit-cat cased for delivery. His usually friendly voice sounded harsh and provoked: "This is Master Murray's portrait repaired and retouched after falling down a staircase. Mr. Greville inspected it this morning, and comes again shortly to carry it to Lord Stormont's, where he lies four nights."

In a moment Emily was all smiles and roguish laughter.

"Cruel Mr. Romney not to tell me at once, instead of leaving me so miserable." A new thought struck her, and the radiance faded from her face. "When he finds me here, perhaps he'll wish himself away, or maybe come no farther than the front door and send in for the picture."

"Mr. Greville inquired whether I expected you, and on learning you would be here at noon, said he'd call for the portrait, did I have it

cased. Upon my pointing out that a kit-cat was over-large for conveyance in a phaeton, he was not best pleased."

Despite her facile gift for personification, Emily was unable to exchange her joyous mood for the grief-stricken expression necessary for *Tragedy*, begun before the artist went away. Mr. Romney fell idly to drawing her head in a variety of careless poses, catching in a few skilful strokes the witchery of her smiles.

"You're like an April day, Emily, when sunshine gains upon the showers."

Emily dimpled and laughed in an access of pleasure. "Do you think Mr. Greville called to find out when I should be here?"

"As he has always shown himself Sir Joshua's friend rather than mine, I cannot flatter myself he came to see me."

Heedless of the artist's chagrin, Emily pursued her inquiries.

"Did he wear a pompadour-coloured coat and a flowered cream silk waistcoat? They become him better than his other clothes—not that he could look ill in anything."

A double knock at the street door saved Mr. Romney from replying. Catching her breath, Emily abandoned her pose and assumed an attitude of shy excitement still more captivating. While her heart throbbed she listened to sounds in the hall; ages seemed to pass before Charles Greville appeared in the doorway. With easy urbanity he crossed the intervening space. "Well, Emily! When I called upon Mr. Romney this forenoon, 'twas a pleasure to see your bewitching face looking at me." Turning to the artist he added: "The picture does you credit, and promises to be one of your lasting works. 'Twould be even better if the uncommon shape of Emily's mouth be more accentuated; the lips are a shade too close pressed, detracting from her sensibility."

Mr. Romney was inclined to resent criticism, but on taking up his brush he pouted the lower lip, an improvement that delighted him.

"The arm, too, might be more fluid; Emily's joints curve rather than bend, which does away with harsh movements that commonly hurt the eye."

Again Mr. Romney made alteration. Greville framed his suggestions in so nice a manner that it was possible for the artist to benefit by sound taste without sacrificing pride.

Emily had advanced and stood beside the easel. She was so close to Greville that she could smell his *marechale* powder, a romantic perfume that made her senses reel. She inclined towards him, hoping

to feel the warmth of his body without her encroachment becoming apparent. His eyes were intent on the artist's brush, and he appeared unconscious of her proximity. Furtively she advanced her arm; greedily she feasted her eyes on his clear-cut, melancholy profile. His face was expressionless, but she knew he was aware of her: suddenly she felt her fingers clasped in his firm, soft hand. A thrill ran through her, she had much ado not to cry out.

Stepping back, Mr. Romney criticized the alterations he had made: "H-m-m, that's much better—gives the impression of pliant strength, characteristic of this divine girl."

"There's naught now to offend the eye. You've happily caught the potentialities of Emily's nature, and shown her as the very soul of grief." As Greville spoke, so his clasp became more ardent; convulsively Emily's fingers returned the warm pressure. Glancing in her direction, Mr. Romney's eyes were arrested by her passionate look; instantly Greville released himself and strolled nonchalantly towards the cased portrait of David William Murray. Lifting it by the cord, he tested the weight.

"Tis over-heavy to strap to the back of a phaeton, and were it not to pleasure my cousin Louisa, I vow I'd not be so obliging."

"Lady Stormont will be unable to detect the repairs I have made to the canvas," Mr. Romney politely observed.

"She will be infinitely obliged; the accident distressed her immoderately, because the picture was to remind her in old age of her son's infant days. The Cathcarts are sentimentally devoted to children; when settling for a second time, Viscount Stormont was wise in choosing Louisa." Charles Greville spoke with greater freedom than his wont, and contrived to make Emily feel the sole recipient of an intimate confidence.

Realizing that his model would be of no further use that day, Mr. Romney dropped a cake of vermilion into a stone mortar and started viciously pounding with a granite pestle. The noise effectively put a stop to sociability. Apparently interested in the operation, Charles Greville stood watching. After a while he produced an enamelled snuff-box and proffered it; shaking his head, the artist went on grinding.

Seated a little apart, and believing herself unnoticed, Emily greedily feasted her eyes upon the elegant dilettante. Greville wore a mulberry-coloured coat and small-clothes, with a grey tabby waistcoat; his linen was plain, his only ornaments the cut steel buckles on shoes and

breeches. A pair of reindeer gloves and a grey round hat were cast negligently on a chair.

Another interval elapsed; Greville crossed the room, glancing meaningly at Emily as he did so. "Well, Romney, I must away, or I'll not reach Wandsworth Hill for dinner. If your posing is ended, Emily, 'twould be but little out of my way to drive you home."

Jumping up, Emily crammed her hat on her curls. "Indeed I'll be thankful to be carried off my feet, for I started walking soon after six of the clock, taking Sophy Nichol and my maid to the Richmond coach for a day's outing."

"You look happy now," Mr. Romney mournfully intervened.

Impulsively she ran to comfort him with a kiss. "Don't think your Emily is less grateful when she is happy. 'Twill always be my greatest pleasure to be your model, and I should be a wretch indeed if I forgot your many kindnesses." With a wry face he accepted her tribute.

It proved more difficult to tie the picture to the back of the phaeton than Greville anticipated; the artist called for more and stouter cordage; finally the project was abandoned and the portrait returned to the studio.

"I'm not sorry to be relieved of the responsibility," Greville confessed as he drove from the square; "the case would likely have damaged my varnish; a younger brother is obliged to consider such trifles."

Although he conversed with well-bred fluency, Greville's manner lacked its customary assurance. Self-consciously he avoided Emily's eyes; now and again he stammered and seemed about to broach an important matter. Oxford Street and Soho Square were traversed before he became explicit: "You may have wondered at my coolness when we parted t'other day at Chelsea. To make a bold confession, I was chagrined by your intention to continue connexion with Captain Payne, instead of transferring your favours to me."

"I was ready to do anything you asked."

"My dear girl, I told you plainly I would gladly act your friend but I could offer no permanent provision. To say more would have placed me in a false light."

"I'd be grateful for half an hour of your company." Interpreting Greville's silence, she added: "Your visits can be secret if you warn me in time to pack Sophy and my maid out of the way."

"Privacy can be assured if I arrive late and leave early. Unhappily

my engagement to my Lord Stormont will keep me out of town until Friday, but I'll be with you that day well before midnight."

"Will you ring the bell?"

"I'll tap on your parlour window."

Greville drew up at the corner of Long Acre. Slipping off his glove, he pressed his hand upon her thigh in an intimate caress. "My dearest, lovely girl, I exist only upon the thought of your kisses."

Bemused with happiness, Emily watched the phaeton till it disappeared round the bend of St. Martin's Lane.

She lost no time in posting to St. James's Square to communicate the joyous intelligence to her mother. There she found everything in confusion, My Lady having decided to return to Warwick Castle. Mrs. Duggan was on her knees in the nursery packing the nail-studded, black, shallow trunks that fitted in pairs on the roofs of the Earl's coaches.

Mary Duggan was too engrossed to observe her daughter's portentous expression. Her kiss was affectionate but hasty: "I'm glad you're come, Emy, for I'd have had a job to let you know we set out at cock-crow. My Lady had a colic in the night and thought her pains beginning, though she's scarce seven months gone. Nothing will do but she must get back to the castle, lest she be brought to bed in town."

"Oh, Mam! Then God knows when I shall see you again!"

"Not this year, certain." Mrs. Duggan's answer was muffled by the collar of Lord Brooke's coat, which she held between her teeth to facilitate folding. "I'm worried to death at leaving you, so giddy as you are."

"I'll act sensible," Emily promised perfunctorily, her thoughts on the momentous fact she was eager to impart.

Mrs. Duggan's head was hidden by the curved lid of a trunk, only her hooped skirt of grey bombazette was visible. The moment hardly encouraged romantic confidences, but Emily could wait no longer.

"'Twas wrong you were about Mr. Greville, Mam. He's not bent on settling, but he *has* thought of me, and to prove it he's coming to Hart Street on Friday."

Mrs. Duggan's flushed face appeared above the box lid.

"What time, Emy?"

She answered complacently: "Midnight."

Mary Duggan rose to her feet, a majestic figure garbed in a neat cap and apron and a servant's gown. In her anger she lapsed into the

idiom of her country. "There's foolish you are, Emy. More sense I thought Mr. Charles had than to tempt you. What can come of it, think you? No fine house can he give you, no clothes nor money. Comfortable you are now; be wise and keep so."

A mulish expression settled on Emily's face. "Indeed I'm not losing, but gaining. A girl has a right to love and to take it if 'tis offered."

"You've done that more than once, I'm thinking," Mrs. Duggan dryly responded. "Don't suppose I haven't heard of the small, foreign-looking sea officer you've been driving with in an outlandish carriage. 'Tis no harm to live free with a gentleman, but it must be one, and not a baker's dozen. When Sir Harry comes back, do you think he'll provide a neat house for a girl who's no better than a strolling mort? Mr. Charles couldn't keep you even if he would, being but a younger brother hardly rich enough to keep up his position."

Emily quailed under this harsh blast of common sense, but maintained a bold front. "I know Mr. Greville will treat me kind, and as I can't live without him, I must chance what comes."

"Then there's no use my talking," said her mother, flouncing down again to her packing.

"But, Mam, when you went travelling to Switzerland with Mr. Will'um Cadogan you must have loved him."

"Maybe! but in taking a bold course I performed a blessed act, if ever one was done; for who'd have tended the poor dying gentleman if I hadn't gone with him? After 'twas all over his father thanked me with tears in his eyes, and, if I'd taken it, would have rewarded me with a hundred guineas."

"Was it true, Mam, that Mr. Cadogan wedded you?"

"A foreign clergyman said some words over us."

Naturally inclined to compromise, Mary Duggan soon allowed herself to be converted into a more lenient frame of mind. "If sweethearts shared a bed for a month before the banns, fewer couples would go to the altar," she philosophically observed, "similarly if you lie with Mr. Charles now, you may feel less fond by the time Sir Harry comes back."

"I shall love Mr. Greville always," Emily emphatically responded.

Mrs. Duggan chuckled indulgently: "There's bold you are to make such a vow at sixteen."

The next day began inauspiciously by bringing a letter from Sir Harry posted in Dresden, the farthest point of his tour. Affectionate

in tone, it promised reunion in the first week of September, Saxony having supplied "no *belle amie* comparable with the lovely Emily". The recipient of this praise had not recovered from the depression it created when her spirits were further subdued by the news of Maria Macklin's death, poignantly announced by a gloomy funeral ticket. The card was a reproduction of an old but still popular design by Hogarth, depicting corpulent mourners in cloaks and crêpe streamers keeping pace with a massive escutcheoned coffin that appeared to float towards a colonnaded church. A copperplate inscription had been supplemented to read: "*You are desired to accompany ye corps of Maria Macklin from her late dwelling in Tavistock Row to St. Paul's, Covent Garden, on Friday next at ten of the clock in the evening.*"

Small rain fell all morning; towards the late afternoon it cleared sufficiently to entice the playhouse women from their lodgings for a gossip before repairing to the theatres. As she crossed the market, Emily was eagerly accosted, the interest of a common bereavement temporarily assuaging jealousy. Good fortune in securing a rich protector and a neat house had estranged many acquaintances made by Emily in her unassuming days. Gratified by friendly overtures, she joined first one group and then another; everyone extolled Maria, as was only fitting, now she was dead. How well she had acted as Lady Townley! And her performance as Jane Shore was as good as Mrs. Crawford's. It was recalled, less charitably, that Miss Macklin had appeared as the Duke of York in Richard III as long ago as 1742. . . .

Encouraged by friendliness, Emily confided her decision not to go to the funeral, although she had promised Maria. She had not bargained for the strictures her admission called forth. Didn't she know how unlucky 'twas to break a vow made to the dead? A man had once done so, and the corpse got out of its coffin and followed the man until he drowned himself. And there was the woman who, having promised her dying child to place birthday flowers on his grave, went instead to a fair and broke her leg. Everyone knew the widow of Carey Street, who pledged herself to be faithful, but took a fancy man and bore a monster. Punishment always resulted from cheating the departed. . . .

The warnings threw Emily into the utmost disturbance. Torn between superstitious fears and the real danger of alienating Greville by failing to receive him, they caused her two sleepless nights and harassed days. On the morning of the funeral she sought advice from

Mr. Romney. The artist reviewed the problem coldly and declared for the dead. "'Tis the last tribute you can pay Maria Macklin; there will be many opportunities for homage to Mr. Greville."

"But if he knocks and gets no answer, he'll go and not come again."

Mr. Romney's face twisted into a queer, pained grimace. "You under-estimate your powers," he said huskily.

That evening Emily's performance of Dr. Graham's cantata fell flat and earned her dark looks from the composer. Determined to evade more active censure until better able to support it, she hurried in her Grecian dress from Schomberg House, and was lucky enough to find a chair standing disengaged outside Christie's auction-rooms. Reluctant to claim Mrs. Montizambia's hospitality, Emily directed the porters to carry her straight to the church.

A full moon, riding high in the summer sky, flooded the town with eerie light. It revealed drunken men of fashion lurching from taverns, and women of no quality staggering out of gin shops; it showed lean dogs routing in refuse-heaps and furtive figures skulking in doorways. In Southampton Street a creaking night-cart diffusing its strong reek caused the porters to break into a trot; escaping one stench only to meet another in Covent Garden.

A couple of torches, burning in the portico of St. Paul's, cast upon the cobbled pavement a wavering shadowgraph of the four Tuscan pillars. Emily was delighted that the gloom was so handsomely mitigated. Her satisfaction was brief; inside the empty church a dozen candles, impaled on a cruciform frame, merely pricked the stuffy darkness. She hurried out again to the portico, a victim of intangible fears begotten of love-sickness, insomnia and fasting.

She looked across the market, blanched by the moonlight. In the centre of the gravel square the Corinthian sun dial stood forth in livid significance, its long shadow blacker than the marble steps at its base. Brickwork and the red-tiled roofs of the Piazzas shrank into the shadowy background; Inigo Jones's stone arches and pilasters alone emerged as skeleton façades. Illuminated windows of the 'Bedford' Coffee-house and the 'Hummums' failed to establish comfortable liaison with the ghostly scene; only the poor, exercising nocturnal privileges as scavengers, were in accord with a spectral setting.

Emily's eyes were attracted by a shaft of mellow light flowing from the 'Bedford' as the door opened to emit a bulky figure, who im-

mediately took a diagonal path across the market enclosure. A wide, sprawling gait, jerky motions and a habit of stopping to lay his hands on any projecting board of post, told Emily she watched Dr. Samuel Johnson. She lost sight of him behind some wooden sheds; when he reappeared he was so close to the church that torchlight fell on his face, illuminating heavy brows, sleepy eyes, broad nose, enormously thick lips and wide double chin. The great man had made no concessions for the funeral, and wore his usual mulberry-coloured coat, black waistcoat, small-clothes and thick, ribbed stockings. His stock was as liberally sprinkled with rappee, and his busby wig as illiberally supplied with powder, as was their common condition. Crossing the portico, he entered the church, but, like Emily, he quickly came out again.

Standing between Tuscan pillars with torchlight playing upon her Grecian robe, Emily startlingly conformed to her setting. Her wonderful beauty had no effect upon the doctor, who, acting as if he were alone, produced a heavy pocket knife wherewith to scrape his reddened finger-joints and pare his nails, already cut to the quick. This cruel habit, coupled with perpetually convulsive movements of his hands, lips, feet and knees, set Emily's nerves on edge.

Her endurance was at breaking point when a distant clatter of hoofs caused Dr. Johnson to move into a position affording an early view of the funeral procession. The shadow of a beadle, pompously carrying a muffled mace, strutted on a fan of torchlight through the opening of Southampton Row. The matrix followed on the heels of the reflection; the beadle being the superior of his shadow in possessing a fat belly and a round, oily face. In the same sequence the procession manifested itself, first the flat counterpart and then the original, until white and black horses, the hearse with its quivering ostrich feathers, and veiled girls carrying white garlands, emerged a complete cavalcade symbolizing virtue—for Maria had died a maid. Behind came the mourners, bringing torches to light the living and rosemary to speed the dead, who, as they walked, kicked from their feet long, black cloaks that dipped in the dust.

Emily and Dr. Johnson withdrew behind opposite pillars as the coffin was borne over the threshold. When the mourners filed past, Samuel Johnson fell into line with Dr. Burney, ousting Richard Tickell, who, with Brinsley Sheridan and Mr. Linley, represented Drury Lane Theatre.

After Mrs. Montizambia had swept majestically across the portico,

Emily took a modest place among ballet-girls and dressers bringing up the rear. It was light enough now in the church: in iron sconces the mourners' torches made rippling lines of flame. Covered by a white pall, Maria's coffin floated like a raft on uneasy waves of light and shade, faces became masks tweaked into curious grimaces, shadows painted caricatures that leapt to the roof.

"We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord." The voice of the Rev. James Tattersall soared up and down with the dancing shadows and kept time with the conflicting sounds that surged in Emily's head. Never had she felt so strange—not even when she had typhus last summer. . . .

For a moment her senses left her, but she caught them again as the clergyman's voice thundered in her ears: "Lord, let he know mine end and the number of my days. . . ." Resolutely she fixed her eyes and her thoughts on the shadowgraph heads trembling on the walls. Mrs. Montizambia's nose had a blob at the end; her head-dress, covered by a calash, looked for all the world like a hay-rick. . . . Mr. Macklin's undershot jaw made the poor man resemble a cod dressed for boiling. . . . Dr. Johnson was own cousin to a hog. . . . Mr. Sheridan. . . . Good God! to what was Emy Lyon coming that she could think so wicked in a church? . . .

Moment by moment the temperature rose and the atmosphere thickened with the stench of hot tallow. Despite the torridity, Emy was victimized by mysterious cold winds that blew first on one side and then on the other and by icy air rising from the floor. She glanced at the torches, but the plumes of light were steady; she looked at her neighbours, and saw them shiny with sweat and trickles of pomade: no ghostly breezes played upon their flushed faces. The evidence that she alone was singled out had a terrifying effect. Stealthily she moved nearer to the torches, the heat, scorching her bare arm, rendered her more susceptible to the play of chilly draughts. Her eyes followed wisps of white mist floating like smoke above the bier; fear caused her heart to beat in sickening thumps against her ribs; her limbs were numb.

"Behold I show you a mystery," intoned the Rev. James Tattersall, "We do not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. . . ."

Emily watched the mist gather into a spiral and fold itself round and round until it formed a cloudy, white bale. Ever moving and twisting, it assumed shape and tenuous substance. A hand formed, a

face showed within a veil of gauze; Maria's face, Maria looking young, radiant, beautiful. Smiling, the apparition floated forward.

A scream rang through the church; Emily fell senseless to the ground.

On struggling back to consciousness, she found herself on the pavement of the portico with her head supported in Jane Farmer's lap. Confused by her situation, she stared at Dr. Johnson, believing herself to have fallen while waiting in his company for the funeral cortège.

"I trust you find yourself recovered, Ma'am," the great man said, fixing Emily with a searching look.

"What o'clock is it?" she inquired by way of answer.

Rocking his body backwards and forwards, he shook his head in an angry, palsied manner. "Time should be of no importance, Ma'am, to one granted a glimpse into eternity, which, to judge by expression, has been your privilege."

Shuddering, Emily struggled to her knees and shuffled away from him. "I don't want to remember what I saw."

While ruminating on a method of inquiry, Dr. Johnson blew out his breath like a whale, and by protruding his tongue against his upper gums contrived a sound like steam puffing from a kettle. "Madam, after five thousand years the evidence of supernatural visitation is still not proven. If you have been used as an instrument to throw light upon this momentous matter, it is your duty to divulge what you saw."

"I'll tell you naught," Emily cried hysterically. "Good God! if I only knew the time!" Standing up, she looked distractedly at the cluster of people who had brought her out of church. "Has nobody got a watch?"

As she spoke the clock overhead bronchially struck the hour. The moon illuminated her anxious, lovely face as her lips counted the strokes. "'Tis but eleven!" she whispered. "If I can run I'll be there in time." Swaying and stumbling, she started to cross the pavement.

In a moment Jane Farmer was beside her. "You can't walk, Emy!"

"I must, or I'm undone!"

Holding Emily round the waist, Jane considered with her usual air of calm detachment. "Richard Tickell has a coach waiting in Henrietta Street. I'll borrow it, and if the funeral is over before I get back, 'twill do him no harm to cool his heels."

Accompanying Jane to the square, Emily waited on an upturned market basket while her friend fetched the coach. She felt sick, frightened and wretched, but her determination to reach Greville never faltered. When the borrowed vehicle appeared, it proved no gentleman's stylish carriage, but a hackney-coach of a dilapidated description. Emily subsided thankfully upon the hard seat, a situation eased by Jane's comfortable shoulder.

"The Tickells are badly off," the actress explained, "and Mary has been exiled at Wells ever since her wedding a year ago. Sherry's trying to get Dick a Commissionership of Stamps, then they'll do better, and the Linleys can be together again in town."

"Once I rode in Mr. Sheridan's private chair; 'twas the finest thing I ever saw." Weak as she felt, Emily was determined to be conversational in order to avoid being questioned.

Jane warmed to her subject: "The brothers-in-law resemble each other, but Tickell will never own a fine carriage unless Sheridan gets it for him."

The hackney-coach was rattling up the narrow street connecting the market with Great and Little Hart Street; danger being nearly over, Emily could relax. "Dear Janie, in a minute we must part; I'll never forget your kindness to me this night."

"My poor lamb, d'you think I would leave you in the state you are? The coachman must tell the Linleys I won't be back till morning; they mayn't like it, but I'm too valuable to be denied."

Emily wearily faced a fresh dilemma. "I'm as well as possible now," she declared, "and Mary Mudge is at home."

"I'm spending the night with you, whatever you say."

The coach turned the corner; Emily poked her head through the window and looked anxiously towards her door. Did an empty street mean that Greville had not come? or did it mean he had come and gone? . . .

"I'll make you a cordial—there's nothing so good as mulled port for dispelling the vapours."

"Oh, Janie, you're kind, but I don't expect to be alone."

"Another man?"

"I—I hope so."

The wheels of the hackney-coach ground to a standstill, but neither Emily nor Jane Farmer got out.

"You're a fool, Emy, to take on so many; only a lady of quality can afford a fresh lover every night."

"Unfair you are, for I've had but two, and my new friend is quite different from either."

"When is he coming?"

"Now, I hope."

Opening the door, Emily stumbled from the vehicle, followed by Jane, who promptly dismissed the driver. Nonplussed, Emily saw the coach rumble along the street and turn the corner.

"Jane, what can you be thinking of? for I cannot have you to sleep."

The actress laughed indulgently. "I've no notion of acting the duenna! If your gentleman comes, I'll go, but I've seen more than one fond woman awaiting a lover who did not remember. Should that happen you'll be glad enough of my company."

It was decided that Jane should watch events from the doorway of an opposite house while Emily kept vigil in the parlour window of No. 7, a plan that seemed excellent until Emily unlocked her front door and faced the black passage that separated her from the tinder-box and candle left by Mary at the foot of the stairs. If she entered, 'twas certain Maria Macklin's gleaming white form would glide from the darkness. . . .

Trembling and overwrought, she remained on the threshold, ready to go in or out as circumstances dictated. In a grudging way she began to appreciate Jane Farmer's proximity, but was ever a girl so cruelly used that she must feel grateful to a friend who spied at a tryst? . . . Time dragged on leaden heels, yet it raced, carrying hope farther and farther away. Greville had said: "Well before midnight," which might have meant eleven or even half-past ten. . . . Indeed, what a fool she was to believe his kisses could ever be for her! . . .

Silence, taut with expectancy, ripped under the impact of unexpected sounds. A dray rumbled into Covent Garden; loud caterwauling in a neighbouring alley was followed by the crash of a breaking jug; the tinkling bell of a night cart rang forlornly from a distant street. Running with its nose to the ground, a dog scented Emily and looked up. Its eyes, like green lamps, shone eerily and were eclipsed. Far away, so faint that only Emily's strained hearing could catch the sound, came a watchman's call: "Twelve of the clock, a fine night, and all's well!"

The cry was the knell of hope; stumbling down the steps, she walked towards Jane Farmer who emerged from concealment. "He won't come now," Emily announced in a flat voice.

"Then we'll go indoors; 'tis chilly waiting about, though it is a

summer night," Jane slowly enunciated in her deep contralto. The matter-of-fact remark was accompanied by a sympathetic caress; Emily's heart warmed to her old friend as it had never done when they worked together. Indeed, they had both learnt much since leaving Mrs. Budd. . . . Thankful for friendly support, Emily returned to No. 7.

Jane had nearly closed the door when she opened it again and, raising a warning finger, stood listening. "Hark! A chair!"

Fatigue forgotten, Emily ran out upon the step. Approaching from Covent Garden came an unmistakable plodding tramp; in a moment yellow torchlight spread over the façades of the corner houses. Jane Farmer streaked back to her hiding-place. Too agitated for subterfuge, Emily remained upon the step, watching the burdened porters advance.

Charles Greville, looking surprised but not displeased to find himself awaited, stepped from the chair, bowed, and kissed Emily's hand. "Due to a mishap on the road, I am later than I expected to be."

"You weren't attacked?" Emily asked affrightedly.

"Only held up and relieved of my purse; there was little in it, so I suffered but inconveniences of delay and borrowing from a friend."

Mounting the steps, he stood aside for Emily to enter; as the door closed she saw Jane Farmer glide from concealment to engage the empty sedan chair.

Encompassed by stuffy darkness, Greville took Emily into his arms and held her firmly, pressing his lips ardently to hers. She felt their hearts beating in unison, driving their blood wildly through their veins, a vital fire that met at their burning lips. Nearly swooning, she lay against his body, leaning her weight upon him lest she fall to the ground.

"My darling," he muttered in broken tones.

Emily sobbed—all the emotional stress through which she had passed found vent in easy weeping.

"Emily! My sweet girl!" Greville's voice conveyed surprised dismay. "What is the matter?"

Clinging to him, Emily smothered her tears in his cravat.

"I love you so," she whispered.

Her words, and the soft warmth of her heaving bosom, roused Greville's passion. He began to urge her along the passage, stumbling in his haste against unfamiliar obstacles.

"Hush," said Emily, holding him back. "You'll have us undone!"

Cautiously she felt her way to the stairs and found the tinder-box; in a moment she had the candle alight and flickering on Greville's strained white face. The transformation of the proud and aloof member of the Admiralty Board into a disturbed and trembling lover gave Emily a sense of power and steadied her nerves. Holding the light aloft, she took his hand, and led him up the steep and narrow stairs. Never had she looked more beautiful; fasting and emotion had etherialized her features, giving her an expression of sublime compassion.

"Greville, dear, dear Greville!" she whispered.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HART STREET was bathed in the glow of sunrise when Charles Greville stepped from the threshold of No. 7. No pleas had made him linger. "We should both be undone if your maid discovered me; sacrificing a little pleasure now, we preserve much more for the future."

To compensate for firmness he kissed Emily a tender farewell, and, before turning the corner, paused to wave his hat.

Prudence and conscience caused Greville's first visit to Hart Street to be his last; he had too nice a feeling for honour to enjoy visiting his mistress in the house of her protector. It became his custom to wait in his phaeton for Emily outside Oxford Chapel, whence he drove her to one of the country resorts north of London. Copenhagen House, notable for fives-playing and a good cellar, became a favourite haunt, and, while dinner was cooking, Greville and Emily wandered along the river-bank or paused to watch lively young bloods playing at fives against the kitchen wall. So affectionate was their behaviour that the comely landlady, taking them for bride and groom, asked their names.

"Mr. and Mrs. Hart," Emily glibly replied.

Later, Greville cavilled at her impetuous falsehood. She answered indignantly, "Would you have me say: 'This is the Honourable Charles Francis Greville, and I am Emily Lyon, singer at the Temple of Health'?"

"No, but there is a distinction between exposure and deliberate invention."

"There was no invention: the name came into my head from Hart Street, and it fits me well, for I have a heart, and 'tis all yours."

Greville was eager for concealment. Strolling through Copenhagen Fields he said: "Our landlady tells me her sister keeps the 'Grey-

hound Inn' at Enfield Town, and suggests we might like to stay there for bracing air."

The idea delighted Emily, and it was rendered feasible by economies at Schomberg House. During July and August, when the nobility and gentry left town for country seats, Dr. Graham looked to the City for his *clientèle*. Reduced fees meant curtailed attractions; only on Wednesday and Thursday nights was Emily billed to appear as Hygeia, Goddess of Health. That her salary was cut down in no way diminished her satisfaction; five days' holiday with Greville would more than compensate for a straitened purse.

Emily prepared for the illicit honeymoon by taking the last bank-note from Sir Harry's tin box, leaving only a guinea for emergencies. With the money clutched in her purse she betook herself to Frith Street, Soho, where French modistes snipped and stitched behind lace blinds. Five pounds bought three Indian calico dresses and caps, a woollen gown for walking, and a shepherdess hat trimmed with cherry ribbons.

Greville engaged rooms at the 'Greyhound Inn' from July 27th to the first day of August, and booked places by the stagecoach, the cheapest and least conspicuous mode of travel. Emily did not inform Mary Mudge and Sophy Nichol of the visit until it was imminent—a piece of strategy designed to curtail questions and reproaches, but which in effect proved her undoing. Mary received the news when holding the kettle extended on its chain; astonishment, relaxing her grasp, precipitated a cascade of boiling water over her legs and feet. Steam and floating ashes obscured her, and, after an ear-splitting shriek, she flung her wet apron over her head and sat violently rocking. Sophy's screams were not so easily stifled; with hands clenched and her mouth wide open, she paused only when breath was exhausted.

"Have done, do!" said Emily, administering a sharp slap; "a pig being killed could make no more noise."

Since aspiring to a better position, Mary had discarded her linsey-woolsey quilted petticoat for one of Emily's muslin shifts. Lapped about her skinny legs, the cotton acted as a hot fomentation upon blistered skin. Tearing off the saturated garment, Emily reached for the flour dredger and used it liberally.

"You'll be all right now," she said, feigning cheerful confidence.

Collapsed and white, Mary looked at her with dull eyes. "You'll have to cut off my shoes."

The leather was tough; haste and perturbation caused the knife to slip and pierced Mary's heel. She drew her breath sharply; Sophy started to scream again. "Be quiet, you little varmint." Taking up a cushion, Emily threw it at her cousin, who recoiled and turned pale as if she had been hurt.

Emily anxiously glanced at the clock, and saw the time was half-past seven: only ninety minutes before the short stage for Enfield left the 'Coach and Horses' in Drury Lane. . . .

"How will you manage for yourself and Sophy when I'm gone?"

"I can't manage," Mary responded decisively.

"Indeed if you cannot I know not what we shall do, for go I must in little more than an hour."

Mary looked at her swollen feet, tried to stand, and fell back groaning. "You'll have to take Sophy with you, and engage a woman to come in and see to me."

"I'll get the midwife from Rose Street," Emily responded. "Run, Sophy, and tell the nurse to come now. You'll find her easily enough in the gabled house marked: 'This is Red Rose Street, 1623.'"

"But I can't read," Sophy wailed.

"Good God! Haven't you a tongue?"

Upon Mary declaring herself unable to mount to the attics, Emily brought down her truckle-bed and set it up in the kitchen. The patient, suffering from pain and shock, gratefully subsided upon it. Leaving her feet exposed, she huddled under the blanket.

"You can't be cold," Emily admonished.

"My teeth are chattering," said Mary truthfully. "Who do you know to stay with at Enfield?"

"A friend."

"That means another man! It can't be Captain Payne, because 'tis not his nature to keep himself so secret."

Rebelliously Emily deplored her bad luck, which always forced a confession. "'Tis another gentleman," she crossly acknowledged.

"He'll have to take Sophy as well, for I can't do naught for her this side Lammas-day, and she'll pine and grow sick cooped in this cellar."

"'Twould do her good to be punished."

"She's amiable when treated kind; 'tis you that makes her contrary. You're alike as twin sisters, and that's where the trouble lays. She won't live to be a grown maid, or you'd see her just such another wanton."

"I never call you names."

"You've no reason to," Miss Mudge answered virtuously.

The midwife, when she came, promised to look in upon Mary once in the day only, her attendance upon three expectant females being imminent.

"That means Sophy must go with you, or you must bide here," Mary announced with satisfaction.

Emily chose the alternative least disagreeable to herself, but with so bad a grace that Sophy's facile tears flowed afresh.

"My God! Can't you put a smile on your face, seeing I'm taking you for a holiday?"

Lack of a second valise obliged Emily to pack her cousin's clothes in a bundle; encumbered with this and her own luggage, she set forth barely in time to catch the stage. Taking to her heels, she dragged Sophy in her wake.

"I can't run; it makes me sick," the little girl panted.

"Don't talk foolish! I can run without stopping from here to the Strand, and without tiring, mind you! Proud you should be to run double as far, seeing you're so much younger."

"I want to ride, Emy!"

"Then want must be your master!"

Suitably dressed for the country, Greville stood waiting outside the 'Coach and Horses' when Emily, like a frigate under full sail, hove in sight. Her hooped skirts billowed; a scarf floated behind her; her hat, dangling from a ribbon round her neck, tossed as she ran. Everything she wore sympathetically recorded the agitation of her mind. Dropping Sophy's moist, flaccid hand, Emily clutched her lover's arm.

"Oh, Greville, thank God you're here, for I thought we should miss the coach, so contrarily has everything gone."

"You haven't brought that child with you?"

"I had to, or stay behind; for my maid has upset a boiling kettle over her feet, and can do naught for herself nor for Sophy."

"You are acting imprudently," Greville coldly asserted. He hesitated, and then indicated that Emily was to follow him through the arch to the coach-yard. Passing a small office with door ajar, he thrust Sophy inside and shut her in. Only just in time, reflected Emily, who had seen her cousin gulp and turn green.

"Indeed I could do no different," said Emily, ardently defending

herself. "Everything happened in a moment, and there was no way of giving you warning."

"But, my dear girl, reflect upon the difficulties of such a position! How explain to the child our connexion, or account to the landlady in Enfield Town, who supposes us to be a newly married couple?"

"'Tis all quite easy," answered Emily, confidently ready to overcome every argument. "I will tell Sophy we are secretly wed, but you are too great for it to be known to my friends. As for the landlady, the truth will do very well for her—there's nothing strange in taking my cousin with us to the country."

"I dislike falsehoods."

"So do I if 'tis a straight-out lie, but to make up a tale that sounds true is no different from inventing a story. Nobody thinks the worse of Mr. Sheridan for putting false happenings into plays."

The coachman was mounting the box, the guard, waiting to swing himself up to the adjacent seat, directed his horn towards his tardy passengers and blew softly upon it a tactful reminder.

Taking the hint, Greville stepped back to release Sophy, who emerged scared and pale, then, drawing Emily's hand through his arm, he proceeded gravely to the coach. "As it is now too late to pursue a wiser policy, we must make the experiment and take the risk."

The coach, a "Flying-Machine" superannuated from the Exeter Road, was shaped like a violoncello-case, and inclined on to the back springs. Built to seat six persons, the Exeter Fly in its degraded state accommodated as many travellers as the guard could pack inside; the unexpected advent of Sophy made little difference to the general inconvenience. Greville, Emily and a blue-chinned empiric balancing a large box of nostrums across his knees occupied the back seat; five small boys bound for Lincoln House School, a fat country-woman and a journeyman tailor crowded into the remaining space.

Sophy sat on Emily's lap; fresh air blowing through the windows restored her colour and her spirits. Tentatively she made advances to Greville, then, growing bolder, she smiled and looked roguishly through curling lashes. His austerity began to melt; he drew her attention to the Caryatides upholding the porch of the 'Queen's Head' at Islington.

"Kar-i-at-i-dez," Sophy painstakingly repeated, and gave a coquetish glance.

"Meaning women from Caryä in Laconia made captives by the

Greeks, who, to perpetuate their slavery, represented them in build-ings as charged with burdens."

"Cruel, wicked people," Sophy answered, with a catch in her voice. "If you'd been there you'd have fought the Greeks with swords, wouldn't you?"

"I trust so," Greville complacently responded.

Sophy followed up her advantage with boldness that infuriated her cousin. Emily's intimacy with Greville had not diminished her awe of him; the deeper she fell in love, the greater grew her diffidence. Gone was the saucy impudence that captivated Sir Harry and Willett Payne, gone, too, was the indifference that had rendered her position strong. In her overwrought and impressionable condition she construed Sophy's childish advances as the cunning of a rival. On reaching the 'Greyhound Inn' her chagrin was increased by being mistaken for Sophy's mother.

"Foolish the landlady must be to think a girl of sixteen the mother of a twelve-year-old child," said she, furiously walking up and down the large, old-fashioned bedroom.

Greville, leaning against the window-shutters, followed Emily with his eyes. "'Tis difficult to believe you can be less than twenty. As your mother neither reads nor writes, she might easily confuse dates."

"Do you think I'm old?" Emily demanded in tones of suppressed passion.

"My dear girl! No! But you are a woman, and not a child." Observing her mortified expression, he added: "It pleases me more that it should be so, for I find little attraction in the immature, be it in art or nature."

"I'm glad I please, yet I'm sure 'tis not because I'm older than I say, for my birthdays have been carefully kept by my gamma with notches cut in the door."

"Do you know where you were baptized?"

"At Neston Church, of course!"

"Have you seen the register?"

"What call had I to do that, seeing I know my age without it?"

"When you visit your home you would be wise to have the entry copied."

"Do you want to see it, Greville?"

"It would be a matter of interest."

"Then I'll get it! Maybe I'll go to Hawarden for Christmas—that is, if I can scrape the money."

He smiled banteringly. "Then I'm not the only one who must consider ways and means."

Drawing near, Emily put her arm lovingly round his neck. "Dear Greville, are you so poor?"

"I think I am in an improving way; if I can sell my house, even at a little loss, that debt will not exist. I have found that a younger brother's pretending to keep house in London is certain destruction, although at present my credit and punctuality in money matters give me the air of a rich man."

His words smote Emily with compunction. "I shouldn't have put you to the expense of coming here."

He kissed her lingeringly. "'Tis a small price for pleasure, and the cost can be made good by retrenchment elsewhere."

The following days were the happiest in Emily's experience. As a lover Greville was perfect. Temperamentally fastidious, he made his approaches with sensitive artistry, playing on her wide range of emotions with the sure touch of a master. Enfield was an ideal setting for romance. The peace of "The Town" was only disturbed by the arrival of the stagecoach, which, after ceremoniously changing horses at the 'George,' set forth again for London. Since the days when Princess Elizabeth occupied the red-brick palace facing the church and market square, life and commerce had digressed; the long street was a thoroughfare to no place of greater importance than the ancient wooden windmill perched on the green hill that commanded the town.

Sophy alone disturbed Emily's felicity. Acting like a conscientious bridesmaid, she accompanied the lovers wherever they went, and was not always satisfied with a passive rôle.

Insinuating her hand into Greville's, she would coaxingly look up at his face. "Now 'tis my turn to be amused; play ball with me, and Emy may look on."

"Have done," Emily crossly intervened. "Where are your manners? You order a gentleman about as if he was a village lad."

Greville took the ball and threw it gently to Sophy, who let it fall more often than she caught it.

Sophy Nichol promised to be as lovely as her cousin. Her cornflower-blue eyes were fringed with long, dark lashes, she had a finely moulded nose, and her vivid, bow-shaped mouth had a pouting under-lip bewitching as Emily's. Reddish-gold hair fell in ringlets on her shoulders, her skin was flawlessly white, stained on the cheeks

with a hectic flush. Gracefully built and lissom, she was possessed of feverish energy and precocious ambitions.

"What will Captain Payne say when he hears you are wed to Mr. Hart?" she asked, narrowly watching her cousin.

Sophy was getting ready for bed in a room overlooking the square. A market was in full swing—stalls lit by guttering flares stretched from the churchyard railings to the highway. Shouts of competing hucksters were drowned by anguished yells from patients having teeth drawn by the empiric who had shared the back seat in the stage from London.

Emily, combing the girl's bright hair, undid a knot with a sharp jab. "'Tis no concern of Captain Payne's whether I'm wife or maid."

Sophy cried out and whimpered: "Because you are jealous, you needn't act spiteful, you horrid thing! If I'd been a little older I could have made Mr. Hart marry me instead of you!" Smiling complacently at her reflection she added: "Greville kissed me last night!"

Looking into the mirror, Emily met her eyes squarely. "On your forehead!"

"It makes no difference where 'twas!"

Swallowing her wrath, Emily gave her cousin's hair a final sweep with the brush. "I'd have you know I'll not suffer you sticking to us like a limpet to a rock."

Apprehension dawned in Sophy's blue eyes. "You'll not go out and leave me behind?"

"I'll find a child to play with you," came the crushing retort.

With Emily action followed immediately upon an idea. Instead of returning to Greville, she sought the landlady in her private parlour. Mrs. Gladden gave her a warm welcome; never since the Town House had become the 'Greyhound Inn' had it sheltered so distinguished a groom nor so lovely a bride. She sympathized with Emily in her dilemma. "I know I shouldn't have liked a quizzing child when I was first wed to my Tom."

"'Tisn't fitting she should always be with us; I thought you might know a girl of her own age she could play with."

Mrs. Gladden thought, and then said slowly: "There's no girl I could name, but my lad Ozias is steady, and about Miss Sophy's age. Sundays he generally spends fishing in the New River; he'd be happy to take her with him."

Emily's thanks were profuse. When she told Greville, he warmly

commended the arrangement. "The child will benefit from a young companion; 'twill check a tendency to forwardness."

Sophy was provoked when told how her day was planned, but looked happier upon being introduced to Ozias Gladden, a handsome, dark boy of thirteen, who, in his Sunday clothes, might have been mistaken for a gentleman's son. Emily, Greville and Mrs. Gladden stood by the pillory to see them off. When Sophy reached the market house she ran back to Greville and flung her arms round his neck; she ignored her cousin, who had manœuvred the separation.

"Pretty cosset!" said the landlady, watching Sophy tripping coquettishly. "Poor lamb, she'll not make old bones!"

The day was brilliant; flying clouds raced before a southwest wind, yet the air was so hot that Emily wore one of her new calico dresses. Cut on modish lines, the gown was lavishly trimmed with lace, ribbons and artificial flowers; a monstrous cap of wired and goffered frills completed the toilet. Greville scrutinized, and looked away. Keenly disappointed, Emily walked beside him past shuttered shops and up through fields to the top of Windmill Hill.

He described Sir William Hamilton's recent gift of funeral vases to the Museum. "The gem of his collection, the Barberini Vase, will never be seen in England unless he brings it himself. It is unique, being made of dark blue glass with white figures cut in bold relief, and was found intact filled with the ashes and burnt bones of the Emperor Alexander Severus."

Emily listened until she could restrain her feelings no longer. "Have you noticed my new gownd?"

"I've not seen it before."

Emily waited for him to add something kind. He did not do so, and she was driven to direct inquiry: "Does it please? for I think it the prettiest gownd I ever saw at the price, which was but two guineas."

"Not pretty for you, my lovely girl, though it might become a woman of fashion. Your dress should be of classic simplicity, so that the eye is not diverted from the beauty of your face and form."

"Then I've never worn a gownd to please you?"

"Yes, on the night we became lovers."

"That was the old cotton robe I wear as Hygeia!"

"What could be a more fitting garb for you, who are pure Greek?" Holding her in his bent arm, he forced her backwards until her face was upturned to the sun. The bright light revealed no blemish in

her flawless skin, no imperfections in her features, nor guile in the large, shining eyes that gazed adoringly into his. "The only spot on your beauty is in your eye, Emily, and 'tis no defect, but an addition to your charm."

They remained on the hill crest, lying close and lovingly in the long grass, hearing larks trilling high in the blue sky and the rickety creak of the mill as it turned with its sails to the wind. Below lay Enfield's straggling street, the palace on the right, the square on the left, with the church and old grammar school parting both from the New River, that curved like a silver vein through fields and parklands.

The lovers took long descending the winding path because Emily would pause to pick wild flowers and little strawberries for Greville. "I wish I could stop the clock and live this moment for ever," she sighed.

At the bridge Greville proposed surprising Sophy by following the river instead of going back through the town. Emily reluctantly accompanied him along the bank until they left behind them the neat houses of Gentlemen's Row and emerged amid meadows timbered with great oak trees and groups of elms.

"I should know it was Sunday," Emily observed—"in a country place every sound becomes gentle for the Lord's day."

Greville's handsome face lit with amusement. "Dear Emily, your sensibility runs away with you!"

At a point behind the church which revealed an empty reach, Greville remarked that Sophy had probably returned to the inn. As they sauntered along the cobbled footpath they noticed a trail of water that continued across the square to the corner of the inn.

"Good God!" Emily suddenly cried, "'Tis Sophy and she's drowned!"

Both ran, but Greville was the first to reach the 'Greyhound,' and he bounded upstairs before she gained the threshold. "All's well," he shouted. "Sophy's only suffered a ducking."

Emily was disposed to vent her relief in anger, but curbed inclination on observing Greville's anxious expression. He stood by the bed looking down on Sophy, whose white face flamed over her cheekbones into patches of lovely colour. Starry-eyed and strangely silent, she lay with her damp hair spread out on the pillow.

In the background Mrs. Gladden nervously reiterated, "Ozias didn't lose a minute in jumping after her, and I ran the warming-

pan over the blankets before I put her to bed. 'Twas no fault of my lad's that she fell into the river."

"You did all you could." Greville's response was impatiently polite. Slipping his hand through the neck of Sophy's shift, he felt her hot, dry skin. Emily saw her cousin start ecstatically and dart a triumphant glance towards herself.

Emily retaliated by addressing her lover: "You go down and get your dinner: I'm used to nursing, and 'tis best she shouldn't be excited."

As evening advanced, Sophy's appearance became alarming, she was shaken by long shivering fits and racked by a short, hard cough. Emily sat up all night, and in the morning looked nearly as exhausted as the patient. A physician, called in by Greville, caused Sophy to lose six ounces of blood from her arm and ordered a julep of plantane and lettuce waters with syrups of violets and poppies—a potion to restore her for a second bleeding in two hours' time. On learning that the operation was to be repeated, Sophy screamed so loudly that her cries were heard across the square. Her strength quickly failing, she clutched Greville and whispered pitifully, "Greville, darling Greville, do not let me be cut again."

"It has done more harm than good," Emily contended.

"'Tis an awkward matter to go against the faculty when once they are in charge."

Happily the doctor changed his policy on his next visit and was contented with applying a couple of blisters and causing frictions and ligatures to be made upon Sophy's legs—treatment universally beneficial in hectic fevers. Despite the authenticity of the prescription, the patient did not improve, and a night was promised similar to the last.

"A woman must be engaged to sit up," Greville said.

Emily was in tears. "How can I make amends for all the trouble I have caused you? God knows, I shall never have it in my power!"

His melancholy face lit with a noble smile; gravely kind, he patted her heaving shoulder. "You acted impulsively in bringing Sophy, and the unexpected expense falls heavy on me, but as I see you are quite repentant I will not reproach you."

Grief did not impair Emily's beauty, which was fortunate, as she wept frequently throughout the day; every time she thought of Greville's magnanimity, tears welled afresh into her eyes. Continually she blamed herself; had she been saving in the past, Sophy's illness need not now have fallen on Greville. . . . 'Twould be a lesson to act

prudently in future. . . . Never, never again should he have occasion to reprove. . . .

By Tuesday morning Sophy's cough had abated, but the blisters over her ribs caused intense pain. The day was sultry and she continually threw off the bed-clothes. Out of pity, and in defiance of the doctor's orders, Emily opened wide the window. Cooling breezes were absent; not so the flies, which, entering in multitudes, added to the invalid's torments. Blaming Emily as the instigator of her misfortunes, Sophy revenged herself by screaming whenever her cousin approached. Exhausted, she at length fell asleep, and Emily was able to creep downstairs.

She found Greville reading some papers of *The Spectator* in a white wainscoted room looking upon the square. The heat was melting the pomade on his hair so that it ran down his cheeks in a mixture of grease and powder. Flies, buzzing in a cloud about his head, were only kept at bay by the use of a fan.

He rose and punctiliously handed Emily to a seat. "We must discuss our plans, sweetheart, for 'tis obvious Sophy cannot be moved to-morrow, and my engagements oblige me to return to town by the early coach."

"And I must be back, too, for a special concert advertised by Dr. Graham," Emily announced with pomp. "I'll borrow a blanket from Mrs. Gladden: well wrapped up, Sophy'll travel comfortable enough."

"'Twould not be safe. I fear the poor child is in a bad way, for I noticed last night she was spitting blood."

Emily was silenced and much shaken by the grim intelligence.

Greville continued: "You will be wise to send her back to Wales as soon as she is restored to a semblance of health. 'Tis too great a responsibility for you to keep her."

In the evening Sophy looked feverish, and fretfully refused a supper of barley broth. The landlady relinquished the bowl to Emily, who, kneeling by the bed, proffered it again. Thrusting it aside, Sophy spilled some of the soup on the blankets.

Greville entered from the landing, whence he had been watching. "If you won't eat you'll not be strong enough to travel; you wouldn't care to be left here alone, would you?"

Fear leapt into Sophy's eyes; her hot hands caught and held his coat. "You wouldn't go without me?"

"Our dear Sophy will be reasonable!" Greville spoke in his quietest and most soothing tones. "My commitments oblige me to be in

town to-morrow; and you know your cousin has engagements on Wednesday and Thursday nights which cannot be broken."

"I don't care how soon Emily goes!"

"Only because you are ill can I forgive you for speaking so ungratefully."

Sophy was not to be deflected: "Then you mean to leave me?"

"I must; but Emily will return on Friday morning. Be a good girl and do all you are told, then you may be strong enough to go home this day se'night."

"Promise to fetch me," Sophy persisted.

"If I pledge my word, will *you* promise to act obediently?"

"I promise," she sighed. Now her point was gained she lay spent, with eyes half closed.

Taking the bowl from Emily, Greville filled a spoon with broth and held it to Sophy's lips. Submissively she opened her mouth and drank. "Dear kind Greville," she whispered in an access of adoring gratitude.

On the following morning Emily and Greville left Enfield as the church clock struck six, and entered Drury Lane two-and-a-half hours later. While a porter went in search of a chair and hackney-coach, the lovers stood outside the 'Coach and Horses', keeping guard over Greville's sealskin valise.

"Mrs. Gladden is paid until the 7th of August; have you sufficient money for your coach fare on Friday?"

"Plenty," Emily lied emphatically.

"Truly? Because I can send you some."

Greville was impatient to be gone. It was Robert Fulke Greville's first day of waiting, and Charles was to accompany him to a Levée at St. James's Palace.

"This day and to-morrow promise to be busy ones for me, as my brother will attend on His Majesty from my house until the Court goes back to Windsor on Friday."

"Then will you be free?" said Emily with hopeful thoughts of a return to Enfield.

"No, indeed! To-morrow evening I go to Coombe, the Honourable Wilbraham Tollemache's place near Kingston, ostensibly to carry my little pug dog to Lady Frances Tollemache, who promises to cure him of his distemper by sea-bathing in the Isle of Wight."

Emily's spirits fell to zero. In a moment she had become a stranger with no claims on this fine being who consorted with royalty and

noble ladies. . . . Maybe she would never see him again. . . . Good God! What a fool was Emy Lyon to give her heart and find herself undone. . . .

Greville's large, deeply set eyes followed in melancholy contemplation a disturbance recording the attempts of a hackney-coachman to forge a way up the crowded street. Presently the vehicle drew alongside, but there was no sign of the porter with the chair. Greville looked anxiously up and down. "I hope the man returns soon, for I shall have much ado to reach my house and dress in time for the *Levéé*."

"Don't wait," said Emily, accepting the rôle of abnegation.

"The chair must come in a minute, but 'tis not right I should leave you unprotected."

Huskily Emily dismissed his misgivings: "I shall be safe enough!"

"Then if you are sure . . ."

Taking a florin from his pocket, he pressed it into her hand. "For the chairman," he said. Climbing into the hackney-coach, he settled comfortably as a hard seat permitted. As the wheels began to turn he leant through the window, crying: "Adieu—you'll hear from me at Enfield."

Emily stood very still, watching the coach receding; when it had disappeared she darted across the street and entered an alley leading to Bow Street. She had a better use for two shillings than to squander it on hiring a chair. . . .

Emily's spirits, like the weather, had become heavy and overcast; her heart was leaden as the clouds looming over London. Never did she expect to be happy again, for Greville, dear wonderful Greville, had proposed no future meeting, nor spoken a word that could be construed into love. All, all was over, and her heart most certainly broke. . . .

On reaching Hart Street she was beset by material difficulties that forced emotional torments into the background. Mary Mudge, limping on two sticks, greeted her with relief rather than warmth. "I'm glad you've come at last, for in another day you'd have found me starved like a rat in a hole. Did you remember you'd left no money?"

Dropping her valise, Emily sank upon a chair. "No, I'd forgotten!"

"The green woman trusted me, but the butcher would not, so the nurse paid, and we owe her for that as well as for attendance."

"My God! I've only a pound left for everything!"

"Didn't your last gentleman give a present?"

"No indeed!" Emily indignantly retorted. "He wouldn't have so insulted me!"

"Queer sort of gentleman! What did you go away with him for if you got naught out of it?"

"Why should I tell you, Mary Mudge, the reason I do this or that?"

"You can't afford to act proud unless you're willing to be locked in the Fleet, for we owe two pound if we owe a penny, and there's little to count on, now Dr. Graham's grown stingy."

"I'll get money somehow!"

"Reckon you're better at spending than earning!"

Emily used her last pound to pay the nurse and pressing bills, before setting out to borrow from Mr. Romney. To her dismay, a servant was in possession at Cavendish Square who gave her a note running:

"Dear Girl, my spirits are so low and I am so generally out of order that I have cancelled my sittings and am accompanying my Friend Mr. William Hayley to Shepperton for a few days' rest and recreation. On my return I look forward to painting the divine Emily in poses worthy of her beauty and only wish for opportunities to prove myself, Her most Obedient and humble servant, *Geo: Romney.*"

Emily would have felt this blow acutely but for being overwhelmed by sudden nausea; she felt so ill that even thoughts of Greville were obliterated. Giddily clinging to an iron railing, she was violently sick, and felt miraculously recovered. Oppressions of every kind lifted, light as a feather, she seemed to float along the Oxford Road. A heap of buns in a pastry-cook's window arrested her airy progress; she stood staring with greedy eyes. Going inside, she bought seven hot from the oven and ravenously devoured them as she walked along.

That night she gave an indifferent performance, but the audience was uncritical and vociferously applauded. While footmen extinguished candles in the concert-hall, Emily repaired to Dr. Graham's closet. She found him at his desk, studying an account-book.

"What do *you* want?" he demanded testily.

Emily would not allow herself to feel intimidated. "Fifteen shillings a week is too little to manage on. Won't you make it a pound, which is meagre enough."

"When you sang in Royal Terrace you appeared every night, and thought fifty shillings a month rich payment."

"But then I had no house and servant on my shoulders."

"Sir Harry told me he had provided until his return."

"So he did," Emily admitted, "but 'twasn't enough."

Dr. Graham gave her a searching glance. "You mean your wants have grown with your vanity? If you wish a heavy purse, you must look to your lovers!"

Emily flushed angrily. "Then you'll pay me no more for my singing?"

"When the *beau monde* come back to town ye can ask again."

On the following day, Emily, at Mary's instigation, pawned various articles of a luxurious nature, beginning with the Dresden china chimney ornaments and ending with the winter blankets. By this means she obtained sufficient money for immediate expenses and to pay the fare to Enfield.

Friday afternoon found her entering the 'Greyhound' and eagerly inquiring for a letter. Her disappointment that none had come was maliciously observed by Sophy, established in a winged chair in the landlady's parlour overlooking the bar. The girl's lovely face and winsome manner had procured many friends among the inn's habitués; Emily found herself superfluous. Feeling strangely ill and languid, she was grateful for the respite, and spent the long mornings and afternoons on the river-bank, watching green water sluggishly flowing towards distant reservoirs. The need being imperative, she tried to solve her difficulties, but her thoughts refused to be wrenched from Greville; if his passion were sated, it mattered not if the remainder of her miserable existence passed in the Fleet or the King's Bench. . . .

On Monday morning Emily wretchedly prepared for a return to London. "Go by the stage if you prefer," Sophy said agreeably; "I shall wait for Greville."

"He won't come."

"Of course he will; he *promised*." Sophy's faith was justified when a special messenger came galloping through the evening sunshine. With trembling fingers Emily broke the seal of her lover's letter and read:

"Sweet Girl. Having but this moment returned from Kingston I hasten to tell you I may be expected to-morrow in the forenoon

with a coach for Sophy's accommodation. Adieu, my dear Emily. *Greville.*"

Terse as the words were, they raised her spirits to extravagant altitudes. Once more the future was bright and full of promise, for Greville must feel a little love, or he would not behave so kind. . . .

Relieved of emotional anxieties, Emily was able to tackle material difficulties with her usual buoyancy. In a rapid survey she considered ways of earning money. The manager of Ranelagh might welcome a new singer. . . . Novices often appeared at the play-houses. . . . Maybe Sir Joshua would pay a pretty woman to be his model. . . .

Suddenly there flashed a simple solution of her problem: to borrow from Captain Payne. No harm could there be in seeking aid from her oldest friend, especially as 'twould be clearly understood the money was a loan. . . .

Emily could always express herself freely to the sea officer, a temperamental affinity rendering the actions of one comprehensible to the other. In a trice she dashed off a scrawling epistle that conveyed breathless urgency:

"For God's sake Jack send me some money the minet you get this, becos without ten pounds I shall find myself in prison. Then what should I doe? Send at once you know whear & save your unhappy Emily. (*Emy*)"

After a hasty sprinkling of pounce she folded her appeal and addressed it to:

Captain Willett Payne
at the home of Sir Gillies Payne, Bart
of Tempsford
in Bedfordshire.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SOPHY was to return to Flintshire on the 23rd of August, a date chosen by Greville as sufficiently distant to allow for the invalid's improvement and for transit of a warning letter. Greville retained the coach-office receipt for an option on a place in the Holyhead coach; that she need not finance the journey lifted a weight from Emily's mind.

"Oh, Greville, Sophy shall be grateful for what you've done!"

But Sophy thought otherwise, and expressed her sentiments in lamentations. "'Tis all your doing. If Greville were here he'd say I am to stay. Why doesn't he come?" Through tangled curls she looked accusingly at her cousin. "You've stopped him!"

After bringing back the girls from Enfield, Greville paid no visit to Hart Street. Gently but firmly he explained that public matters had prior claim on his time; he instanced the strain thrown upon the Board of Admiralty by news just received of Admiral Hyde Parker's action with the Dutch Fleet off the Dogger Bank. An intimate footing at Court also entailed obligations; grandsons of the King's foster-mother had a place in His Majesty's regard, and their attendance was expected on important occasions.

Emily yielded to reason, a docility engendered by treachery of body rather than by discipline of mind. She had become a victim of nostalgia, megrims, morning headaches and nausea—maladies curbing passionate appetite. Without emotion she learnt that Greville was to pass the week-end at Salt Hill preparatory to attending the Prince of Wales's birthday ball at Windsor Castle.

Money difficulties had become acute, solicitude for Greville forbade an appeal for assistance, and the only aid she could expect was from Captain Payne, who so far had failed to respond. A letter from Sir Harry was also long overdue. In less than four weeks, unless benign fate intervened, she must greet the returned traveller and face

the reckoning. Like a straw floating ever nearer a cascade, Emily was helpless to escape, for by no twists and turns could disaster be avoided. Greville alone had power to rescue: when next they met she would conquer humility by a bold claim for protection. . . . At no expense to him—Emy Lyon would work for her keep. . . .

Unfortunately for resolution, she felt giddy and sick on reaching the British Museum, the rendezvous of Greville's choice. As admission was by ticket, and limited to conducted parties of ten persons, Greville, who had unrestricted access to the rarities, could count on privacy. He had directed Emily to wait outside Montagu Great Gate. In her eagerness she arrived before the appointment, and, to beguile herself, paced between the red-brick turrets on either extremity of the building. The afternoon was cloudy and threatened rain; scurries of dust blowing along Great Russell Street whipped her eyes and made them smart. Contrary to Emily's expectation, Greville approached on foot, having dined early with Sir Joseph Banks in Soho Square. She started violently when his hand fell on her shoulder.

"Fie! Emily, did ye fear arrest?"

She stood pressing her hand to her beating heart. "Oh, Greville, you can't think what my fears were!"

Provoked by unreasonable conduct, he gave her a disapproving look and led the way through the gate and across a court-yard to the principal entrance of Montagu House. In the hall a group of gentlemen awaiting a conductor enviously watched him proceed up the grand staircase, followed by Emily, who found herself greatly incommoded by the climb. On the landing she secured a rest by admiring the frescoes that depicted feasts of Bacchus. "How beautiful!" she murmured weakly.

Greville conducted her to a corner looking down upon a coarse painting of Vesuvius in eruption. "A bad painting, but it vividly recalls the panorama seen from the roof of my uncle's legation in Palazzo Sessa."

"Is that the burning mountain of Naples?"

"Indeed yes, and it flames and smokes by day and night."

The topic provided a natural introduction: "Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh told me about it; he stayed at Naples."

"With the Duke of Hamilton; I recall hearing of the visit," Greville dryly rejoined.

"Sir Harry will be back in England at the beginning of Septem-

ber." She watched for signs of dismay; Greville's expression remained calm and uninterested.

Sudden faintness obliged Emily to relinquish her design. Almost blindly she followed her lover past cases of stuffed birds, mineralogical specimens and skeletons of animals. Greville, not to be deflected from antiquities, walked on to a bust of Hercules.

"This is Sir William's latest gift; the head is declared to be better than that of the Farnese." He waited in vain for some response. "Do you not care for it?"

"Oh, 'tis beautiful!" In a desire to please she overemphasized enthusiasm.

"Perhaps you may like better the vases which form the bulk of Sir William's collection."

This time Emily's appreciation was unfeigned. The long lines of terra-cotta vases ornamented with silhouetted figures of gods and goddesses, athletes and graces, commanded her attention because they represented perfection of form that, subconsciously, she connected with herself. An idea vaguely took shape. "Had I seen these first, how much better would have been my attitudes at the Temple of Health!"

"You could not find a superior school for correct anatomy and vigorous grouping than in the true Etruscan vases of the sixth or fifth century."

"Where did so many jugs come from?"

"Ss-sh! Not jugs, Emily! These sepulchral vases are chiefly from cemeteries of the great Etruscan cities—but the Hamiltonian collection is composed of both Greek and Roman antiquities."

"Did Sir Will'um give all these?"

"The collection was purchased from him eight years ago for eight thousand four hundred pounds, and since augmented by handsome gifts, which I fear are not always felt by the trustees."

Emily accorded close attention to every vase depicting female figures. Presently she threw herself into the varied poses, changing with lightning rapidity from grave to gay, from tears to laughter.

Greville's applause was gratifyingly spontaneous. "My dear girl, you are a piece of *virtù* magically come to life; every posture is classically graceful. Practice would perfect your attitudes into something quite out of the common."

Thus encouraged, Emily acted the memorial legends until headache and malaise conquered ambition and vanity. Stopping sud-

denly, she looked with a pale, anxious face at Greville. "I feel so ill I fear I must be going to die."

He laughed indulgently: "The gallery is airless and you are the victim of your own sensibility; come down to the garden and recover."

Pacing slowly along the secluded paths, Emily's distressing symptoms abated and she ceased to fear irrevocable disgrace before her fastidious lover. As they walked she heard something of the State Ball at Windsor Castle. "Did you dance?" she jealously inquired.

"Naturally I took part: it was especially necessary I should make a good appearance, as my brother's foot was troublesome from over-exercise, and he was obliged to relinquish, to General Budé, attendance on His Majesty."

"Did the Prince of Wales dance with anyone particular?"

"'Twould not be etiquette to single out one more than another, but at supper perhaps it was not quite accident that placed His Royal Highness next to Lady Augusta Campbell."

"And did you have a friend to sit by?"

"Two—the Duchess of Hamilton and the Honourable Dorothy Willoughby, daughter of my next-door neighbour in Portman Square."

"She's pretty, I suppose?"

"Tolerably, but she lacks the charm of her younger sister." Greville spoke absently, as if unaware of a cross-examination. Then, recollecting himself, he looked annoyed. Brusquely he changed the subject: "Is Sophy gaining strength?"

"Yes, but she asks for you, and blames me that you do not come."

"Poor child! Tell her if Sunday be fine I will drive ye both to White Conduit House for a last treat."

Sunday came and brought a clear sky, but Greville was at the Nore sailing around Admiral Hyde Parker's battered fleet while twenty-one gun salutes thundered in honour of the King. Greville attended the review unofficially: he, Lord Palmerston and Sir Joseph Banks were guests in Mr. Shuttleworth's pleasure-boat. In a note of apology to Emily, Greville candidly admitted:

"The invitation is too advantageous to be refused, it is essential for a man *de prétention* to keep within the Royal notice."

Before breaking the wafers Emily knew what to expect; into the lines so neatly written and elegantly expressed she read more than

momentary disappointment. No need now to trouble over being unfaithful. . . .

From the room upstairs sounded Captain Payne's cheerful whistling and brisk footsteps as he changed from dusty travelling clothes into the smart uniform he kept for town.

On returning from a walk with Sophy, Emily had found the sea officer ensconced in the parlour eating cold beef and drinking porter. Rising, he received her in a possessive and affectionate hug. Because his mouth was full, he was unable immediately to kiss her; the interval was occupied in searching an inside pocket for a bundle of bank-notes.

"Here are twenty-five pounds, my pretty, and I hope 'tis enough to get you out of your scrape; nobody knows better than I how beastly 'tis to be screwed for money."

Instead of answering, Emily was overwhelmed by a passion of tears. Taking her into his arms, Captain Payne rocked her against his shoulder and administered soothing thumps on her back; the treatment was completed by a deep draught of porter.

"That's better! You look half starved, Emy, and as black about the eyes as if you'd been in a brawl."

"'Tis worry," Emily answered weakly.

"Faith, even a land officer could see that!" Returning to his meal, Captain Payne quickly dispatched the remainder of the beef and emptied the tankard. While he was drinking, he and Emily became aware of Sophy watching from the doorway. Half rising, he clapped his hands and peremptorily shouted: "At the double! At the double!"

Sophy ran, but not before she had cried tauntingly: "I'll tell Mr. Hart, so I will!"

"Tell whom ye please, ye wriggling maggot!"

Sophy's threat sank into Emily's mind. . . .

Captain Payne neatly took a pinch of snuff, watching quizzically the while. "Is Mr. Hart a new friend, my faithless baggage?"

"'Tis a name I invented for Charles Greville, so that his honour need not suffer from connexion with me."

"I'll wager he takes kindly to sheltering behind your petticoats?"

"You don't speak fair; his behaviour is all kindness and goodness."

"If he's not a swabtail, why dost appeal to me for help?"

"Because he's poor, being but a younger brother with an annuity too small for the calls of his position."

"Did he tell you that?"

"How should I know else?"

Captain Payne sorrowfully shook his head. "My pretty Emy, I warned ye weeks ago you'd be hard up in a clinch if you followed your fancy for Charlie Greville."

"There's naught wrong!" Emily's voice rose in exasperation. "I tell you he's good and kind as possible."

"Anyway, 'tis me that you look to for help!" Captain Payne complacently retorted. Rising from the table, he brushed some crumbs from his uniform. "I'll run up and change into my best, then we'll drive round the town and see what's afoot."

Emily sat still, dully reviewing her situation. To deny hospitality and favours to one who was generous never crossed her mind. She regarded Captain Payne affectionately as her oldest friend; but for Greville she would have kissed and laughed and felt no scruples. Love for Greville had changed everything. She wished to keep herself for him, only for him. . . .

A double knock on the front door broke in upon emotional reflections. Mary, in rag slippers, padded up from the basement, and presently appeared with a letter. It was the note from Greville that dashed Emily's hopes but saved her face. . . .

Recklessly she consented to all Captain Payne's wild schemes for entertainment. From the best seat in the stand at Tyburn she saw the rope adjusted around the neck of an ugly highwayman, and as the cart moved away, fainted, unhappily reviving in time to see sympathetic friends bringing suffering to an end by pulling the twitching legs of the body drooping from the gallows. She went the rounds of the pleasure-gardens and visited the Haymarket Theatre, where Mr. Colman was attracting immense crowds by the production of *The Beggar's Opera* with men's and women's rôles reversed. The modest demeanour assumed by the athletic and robust Mr. Bannister as Polly caused Captain Payne to laugh uproariously, but Emily, seeing the performance as it would appear to Greville, failed to be amused.

"What a Miss Grizzle you are, Emy! 'Tis no longer any fun to take you out, for you do nothing but look superior."

On Monday morning he suddenly decided to hire a post-chaise and drive down to Woolwich Dock to inspect his new command. The *Enterprise* was being overhauled, and would not re-commission until the 30th of August.

"I'd like to see how things are shaping. Pat Leslie, her last com-

mander, is as good an officer as any in the Service, but he's not particular about a ship or her kelter."

"Will you be long gone?"

"It may be a day or as long as a week—I'll tie myself to nothing but the promise to come back before I'm posted."

Emily was glad of the respite, as it gave her two days in which to pack Sophy's clothes. The girl's sullen mood had not lifted during Captain Payne's visit; veiled threats lay in the dark looks she gave her cousin. Happily Emily's health had improved, and she felt better able to cope with difficulties. The settlement of her debts had eased her mind, and pride was assuaged by a call at the coach-office to pay the fare to Hawarden. If Greville were indifferent she would be beholden for naught but a heart that was broke. . . .

Late on Thursday night she sat by the parlour table stitching three pound-notes into the hem of a flannel petticoat for safe conveyance by Sophy to their grandmother. Unheeding, Emily heard a coach stop outside; a moment later she was startled by gentle tapping on the window. Cautiously she opened a shutter and peered between the crack; it was moonlight, and she clearly saw Greville's graceful figure. Trembling she rushed to the front door and softly withdrew the bolts.

"I fear I'm a late visitor, Emily; had all been dark, I should have gone away."

Emily yielded to his arms. "Thank God you stayed; indeed I thought myself forgotten, and felt bitterly towards you."

"By acting upon impulse at the expense of reflection, you form false conclusions and make unjust accusations. *À propos* I understand you have paid the balance on Sophy's coach ticket. My dearest Emily, I contracted to pay the fare; by going behind my back you imply doubts of my intention."

Gazing with great, sorrowful eyes, Emily attempted a defence: "Indeed, dear Greville, my reason was not what you think; I only felt that if you no longer liked me I could not take your money."

"What a true woman it is!" Playfully pinching her ear, Greville administered a forgiving kiss. "The explanation bears out my argument; your action resulted from wounded pride, and not from judgment."

Emily sighed; 'twas clear she could never hope to be a rational woman. . . . Aloud she said: "I will own myself wrong and admit

the justness of what you say, for I always think you right when I stop to consider."

"Then we'll forget the misunderstanding in each other's arms."

As Emily led the way with the candle, she was shocked to find herself praying that its light might be insufficient to reveal a greasy imprint of pomatum on the second pillow. . . .

Prudently Greville left the house soon after dawn, promising to return at eight o'clock to conduct Emily and Sophy to the Holyhead coach. Feeling too happy to go back to bed, Emily descended to the kitchen and lit the fire as a pleasant surprise for Mary. Stooping brought on an attack of giddiness and sickness, but she quickly recovered and thought no more of the incident.

Sophy ate her breakfast in gloomy and hostile silence; she flushed when told that Greville would take her to the coach, but otherwise betrayed no emotion. Emily and Mary laughed and talked, relieved that they would soon be free of the difficult visitor.

Emily was dressed and waiting on the step long before Greville was due. The sun already shone warmly, and the temperature threatened to be even higher than on the preceding days. Smells of every kind, mingling in a rich effluvium, seemed as much part of London as the cobblestones and street-posts. House-flies, blue-bottles and flies of emerald green buzzed a droning accompaniment for vendors' cries, protesting brays of milch-asses being driven on their morning round, yells of sweeps from chimney-stacks and the whining voice of a woman who trailed along the gutter singing:

*"The King and Prince went to the Nore,
They saw the ships and main;
The Prince and King they went on shore,
And then came back again. . . ."*

A post-office messenger carrying letter-bag and money-wallet approached from Bow Street; gloomy foreboding oppressed Emily as she watched him advance. Drawing near, he grinned and waved an elaborately sealed packet. "Here 'ee are, m'darling, a love letter all the way from Hanover, and I'm only charging 'ee eighteen pence, which is dirt cheap for such a pretty packet."

Emily had her purse and paid miserably for the letter she did not want.

Sir Harry wrote that he and Mr. Winstanley expected to embark at Hamburg for Great Yarmouth on the last day of August:

"after a charming and instructive tour through the King of Great Britain's German dominions. On reaching England I will post up to town where I hope to find the beautiful Emily a loving and obliging *petite dame*."

Refolding the letter, she stood quietly. Weeks of freedom had encouraged a belief in its continuance; the truth came as a shock.

When Charles Greville descended from a hackney-coach, Emily gazed at him with tragic speculation. He brought three milliners' boxes and a packet of cheese-cakes from the Chelsea Bun House; she helped him to carry the gifts to the parlour.

Rushing downstairs, Sophy flung herself into his arms. "Oh, dear Greville, darling Greville, 'tis glad I am to see you!"

"And I to see you!" After kissing her on each cheek, he gently released himself from her clinging arms. "Go and look what I have brought!"

Sophy tried to snatch the boxes from Emily, who was on her knees untying the coloured strings. Greville intervened: "Fie! Sophy! You may unpack your own present, but you must not touch your cousin's."

"Are they not all for me?"

On Greville shaking his head, her face flushed and tears trembled on her lashes. Miserably she accepted the smallest box and took it to a corner.

Emily discovered an enormous flat straw hat trimmed with blue ribbon, and a dress of rich silk, plainly made but for a blue sash and a life-like artificial rose. Holding the gown against herself, she thanked Greville with an eloquent glance. Delicately touching the fabric she murmured: "Indeed 'tis the most beautiful silk I ever saw—paler than the lilac that nods over my gamma's wall."

"The milliner called it '*Soupir étouffé*,' which means a stifled sigh."

"Then 'tis the right colour for me, because Sir Harry writes that he arrives home at the beginning of the month!" Elevated by the gifts into false confidence, Emily's announcement rang like a challenge.

Greville's eyebrows went up as he glanced significantly towards Sophy.

At that moment the girl turned, and after a swift curtsy, ran to

nestle against his arm. "I love you, always I'll love you," she breathed. "Look at the dress I will and say; 'Greville gave me this because he thought of me with kindness'; but wear it I shall not until I'm dead."

For the first time Emily saw her lover out of countenance. He was flushed as he roughly shook himself free. "Nonsense, Sophy! The dress is to wear now, and no thought of me must go with it; remember, you're only a little girl!"

With a smitten white face Sophy gazed, then, uttering a low moan, she ran from the room.

The drive in a hackney-coach was fraught with tension; Greville described the Review at the Nore and the poignant spectacle of the battered *Berwick's* gallant crew lined up with new crutches to cheer their Sovereign as he sailed past in the *Princess Augusta*. As usual, Greville's voice was low and measured, but he appeared uncomfortable and eager for the journey to end. Happily the distance to the 'George and the Blue Boar' was inconsiderable by the short cut through Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Emily was unable to give her whole attention to Greville, due to apprehensions aroused by Sophy's demeanour. Trembling with excitement, the girl stared at her cousin with the menacing triumph of an enemy secretly armed with a grenade. Her moment came when Greville leaned forward to see if the wheels would clear the narrow gate into Holborn.

"Did Emy tell you that the little black man she calls Captain Payne kept her company while you were away?"

Greville's searching glance flashed from one girl to another. "Have you not been told, Sophy, that it is dishonourable to disclose to a third person matters that are not your concern?"

Emily sat very still, like a wounded creature that seeks by quiescence to elude the hunter, while Sophy shrilly excused herself: "No harm there is in telling if warning is first given, and that I did, as Emy must say!"

She quailed beneath Emily's stricken stare. "You warned me right enough; 'twas my foolishness made me believe you could not act so base."

The wheels of the hackney-coach ground to a standstill outside the inn; half a dozen porters appeared and struggled for possession of Sophy's small nail-studded trunk. Leaving Greville arguing over the fare, Emily miserably pursued the victorious porter through the

archway to the yard. Loiterers and "regulars" were gathered to watch the Holyhead coach go out. An old lady had taken her seat, but other passengers stood waiting until the horses were in. Sophy danced about excitedly, pretending to be at ease by a display of excessively high spirits. Spots of colour burnt in her cheeks, her wild antics made her breathless and brought on her cough. Many people interrupted conversations to stare curiously at the lovely girls. Intoxicated by a complexity of emotions, Sophy began to act for her audience, and was soon so carried away that she sidled up to Emily with pretty gestures of affection. The blow that sent her reeling was heard across the yard. Murmurs and shocked glances followed Emily as she sought seclusion behind a stable door. Sophy's hysterical tears were soothed by strangers; nobody thought of comforting Emily, who looked like one of the *Furiæ*.

Ostlers brought out the horses, and, to a running commentary from a postilion riding the leader, backed the wheelers into their places on either side of the heavy pole. As the coachman and guard consulted the way-bill, Greville appeared. Sophy saw him, and instantly abandoned kind sympathizers to fling herself into his arms.

"Bear it I can't," she wailed.

"Hush, Sophy; you're making an exhibition!"

"Emily struck me!"

"Do not fret!"

"I won't if you love me best!"

"You are a dear child."

"But do you love me?"

Greville's eyes swept an attentive audience; his voice dropped lower: "If I say 'yes' will you be content?"

Looking spent and pale, Sophy allowed him to lead her to the coach and lift her within.

Vacating her haven, Emily hurried to the door. "Don't forget to give my present to granny," she admonished.

Sophy took no notice. Tears ran down her cheeks as she pressed her weebegone face to the thick glass for a better view of Greville. The coach started; Sophy stood and held out her arms. . . .

"A loyal nature," Greville approvingly observed as he led the way from the yard.

"You say that to strike at me!" Indignantly Emily stopped and barred his path.

"I never stoop to innuendo, but as you broach the matter, I must

retort that your conduct is so wild and giddy that a friend must feel apprehension for your future."

"Oh, Greville, if I was in your possession I would be true, indeed I would."

Taking her by the arm, he hurried her past the inn windows. "My dear girl, from the first I made it plain I was in no position to embark upon a connexion of a permanent kind, especially when you have a rich overmatch whose pleasure it is to maintain you. If you wish to act wisely and kindly to yourself and to me, you will return obediently to Sir Harry, making it your object to earn his esteem by good conduct."

"But I love you!"

"My dear Emily, love begets faithfulness, and ye have just betrayed my confidence."

"I did not! I loved you all the time!"

"That is a line of heroics, Emily. You must put me on the footing of a friend, and by conducting ourselves on that plan, you can count upon your concerns being interesting to me."

"Do you mean you'll not be my lover again?"

"I know 'tis difficult for a woman to see things from a man's point of view, I can only say it would be dishonourable to go behind Sir Harry when you are under his active protection."

"Oh God!"

"Come, Emily, call upon your good sense and I shall not repent the offer of my friendship. Apart from other circumstances, our connexion must have suffered a long interruption, as I set out on Sunday for a visit of several weeks to Warwick Castle. When I'm there 'twould afford me pleasure to assure your mother ye are following a prudent counsel."

"May I see you once again before you go?"

"Wiser not." As he spoke he beckoned to a couple of chairmen swinging numbed arms after setting down a fare. In a moment Emily found herself shut in the sedan, while Greville, a pattern of aristocratic elegance, stood bowing with melancholy urbanity.

For three days Emily lay on the bed weeping and making plans which came to nothing. On Wednesday night she had presented herself as usual at Schomberg House, to be sent home by Dr. Graham when he saw her red and swollen eyes.

"Lost a lover?" he inquired laconically.

"My heart is broke."

"The heart is a resilient organ."

Emily found the doctor was wrong, and only hoped she would die before Sir Harry came home to demand "a loving and obliging *petite dame*." She felt sufficiently ill and wretched to anticipate an early dissolution when Captain Payne returned on Saturday morning. He administered a dose of Barbados rum, which had a miraculous effect.

"What's shook ye this time, my pretty?"

"Mr. Greville's bid me farewell and Sir Harry's coming home at the beginning of the month."

"The first is no loss. As to Fetherstone, he's a better master than many, and ye can't hope to live in Fidler's Green while you're in this world, my pretty. But I'll tell ye what—when the war's over I'll set you up myself in a handsome way."

"The war may last for ever!"

"Don't ye believe it! Despite Lord Sandwich and the Admiralty Board, the British Navy will beat our enemies!"

Captain Payne's robust personality resumed its sway over Emily's responsive nature. Her hopeless attachment for Greville formed a grey background for every thought, but she was sufficiently invigorated to leave her bed to take part in the gaieties of the town. It was her last chance to be wild and giddy—Sir Harry's ideas of dissipation were heavily voluptuous, and bore no relation to the sea officer's volatile diversions. All too quickly the day arrived when Captain Payne must proceed to Woolwich.

"'Twill be three weeks or more before the *Enterprise* is out of dockyard hands, and another week 'twill take to clean her. You needn't fear this will end our frolics: 'twould take more than the marm-puss of the 'Crown and Anchor' to keep me from you and London Town."

"If you come, Sir Harry will be here."

"What of that? You're my prize, when all's said and done."

When he had gone, the little house in Hart Street was quiet and lonely. Emily had no friends to supply distraction—Jane Farmer had accompanied Maria Linley to Ramsgate; George Romney was spending ten days with Mr. Hayley at Eartham. Emily had time to think, which was the last thing she wished to do. Seeking entertainment, she wandered through sun-baked parks and squares, and arrived at St. James's Palace in time to see richly dressed ladies going to a Drawing Room. On the outskirts of the crowd she found herself face to face with Robert Fulke Greville. He had on the Windsor uniform

of blue and gold turned up with red, worn by equerries attending on His Majesty. Colonel Greville's greeting was genial: "I'm sorry to see you are not looking so well as on the day we ate Chelsea buns with my brother and Captain Willett Payne. I hear your friend has just been posted to the *Enterprise*; I saw the ship a few days ago, lashed alongside the *Antelope* at Woolwich Dock."

"He went this day to join her."

"You will miss him—a friend is very necessary in our great city."

Colonel Greville's kindly tones brought tears to her eyes, and she had to hurry away for fear of breaking down. In her miserable state a word might slip out injurious to dearest Charles. . . .

Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh reached London by post-chaise on the 8th of September. His heavy luggage, which included bales of Göttingen camblets, baraguins and other fine cloths; silks, stockings and ribbons; a carpet; oil skins; boxes of silver and gold galloons and laces from the famous manufactory at Hanover, followed by the Norwich waggon. When all his possessions were arrived, he and Emily were to repair to Uppark.

He observed her fragile appearance, and was flattered by attributing it to his long absence. "As I am alive to all nervous sensations, be assured, *ma belle Émilie*, that I understand the *inquiétude* my prolonged *séjour* among the lovely Hanoverian women must have caused you. I confess to an occasional amour, but a few guldens ended romance satisfactorily to both parties, and I return to you with ardour undiminished."

Emily submitted to his embrace with docility acquired by practice. Compassionate darkness veiled the small bedroom that had harboured many phases of love. Tightly shutting her eyes, she evoked a mental image of her dearest Charles, and while it was difficult to reconcile Sir Harry's clumsy fondling with Greville's delicate caresses, she succeeded so well in conjuring up his image that her protector was enchanted.

"*Geben Sie mir mal ein kuss!*" said the baronet, airing the German he had learnt on his tour.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AS the leaves were turning, Sir Harry re-established his *protetta* at Uppark. From the attic where Emily spent much of her time she looked across a waste of brown and gold to the sapphire gleam of Portsmouth Harbour and Spithead. In the early mornings sea mist isolated the mansion and seeped coldly along the underground passage to dissolve damply on walls and paving in the stone hall. Everywhere felt chilly as a sepulchre; hangings were stickily clammy, mildewed smells permeated drawing-rooms and bedchambers. Following upon the snug stuffiness of Hart Street, the great establishment was inexpressibly comfortless.

After his long absence Sir Harry found the estate in urgent need of inspection. Anxious to keep her protector in good humour, Emily accompanied him on an expedition to Hurst Mill at Harting, to discover she was no longer a horsewoman to gain plaudits for pace and daring. Cantering caused the most curious sensations; a gallop sent a spasm through her body that nearly made her swoon. Pulling up, she clumsily dismounted and was violently sick. Sir Harry had traversed a considerable distance before he missed her and came trotting back.

"What's wrong, Emy?"

"My God! I feel like to die!"

"And look like it too! What did ye take for breakfast?"

"A scrap of toast and a cup of milk—I haven't fancied my victuals this long while."

A strange look changed the expression of his face; his features became sharper and more foxy, suspicion lurked in the glance that raked Emily up and down.

"Are you wearing a padded petticoat under your habit?"

Feeling the onset of fresh qualms, she answered irritably: "How could I ride in a quilted skirt? I've naught underneath but knitted

tights." To emphasize the fact she swept her body with her open hands, a gesture that revealed a coarsening of her lovely figure.

Emily gazed at her protector with frightened eyes; her lips moved, but no words sounded. Suddenly Sir Harry lashed his horse, wheeled about, and in a few moments had cantered far down the russet glade.

Leaving her mare to crop the grass, Emily sank upon a tree-stump. A second attack of nausea momentarily dulled her to anything but physical misfortune; afterwards she sat very still with fear as her companion. She was so quiet that a red squirrel, watching with beady eyes, flitted nearer and nearer; a young doe, driven off by the cantering horses, timidly returned to nibble bell-shaped fungi growing among the fallen leaves. Sunshine that had lost the bland orange glow of early autumn dappled the glade with a wan shadowgraph of thinning foliage; presently the pattern faded, leaving a grey light between the pewter columns of beech trees. Cold salt air blew along the ground, outlines became hazy; the squirrel and the doe were no longer to be seen.

Emily rose; again she pressed her hands to her body and slowly swept them downwards. Her breath caught with a sharp, strangled sound; frantically her eyes scanned the narrow glade. Darkness was increasing and no way out was clear.

That evening, wearing her widest hoop and richest gown, she drank Sir Harry's wine until her eyes sparkled and her laugh rang recklessly through the red drawing-room. The sour looks the baronet had bent upon her on his return from Harting were mellowed by the champagne with which she plied him.

"Faith, Emily, you're a lovely wench even if ye are a whore," he hiccupped genially. "I've had a pretty good taste of women, but I've never kept one for whom I feel more partial." Raising a finger, he wagged it at her portentously. "But mind ye, that doesn't mean I'm the man to be imposed on!"

Emily re-filled the long, thin beaker, so clumsily that the sweet pink champagne overflowed and stained the lace flouncing of her petticoat. Accepting the glass, he solemnly drank. "There, I've drunk your health, Emy, and I'd drink it again, but I've done pretty well already. We have to keep up our spirits, be up in the world, as folks say." Catching Emily round the waist, he dragged her down upon the walnut daybed. "Faith, though you mayn't know so many tricks as

the *comédienne* of the Elector's French theatre, you're a tantalizing creature."

Half a dozen candles flaming on the marble chimney-piece revealed the brocaded pattern of the crimson flock wall-paper and illuminated Batoni's portrait of Sir Harry. The light, shining directly upon the picture, emphasized the baronet's sharp features and sandy-red hair, brushed back and rolled into curls over the ears, *à la Macaroni*. Leaning with his right arm on the plinth of a stone urn, he stood negligently caressing a mastiff with clipped ears. Master and dog looked in the same direction, which perhaps accounted for a pronounced facial resemblance. Painted large as life, the beau could hardly be recognized in the dishevelled gentleman whose hair hung in greasy lanks over lustful, bloodshot eyes.

Overwhelmed by repulsion, Emily shrank and hid her face with her arms. "Have done, do, and leave me alone!"

"Leave ye alone? I vow that's a good one! Do you suppose I keep ye for ornament, like the broken statue I bought from Gavin Hamilton?"

"God knows I'm broken, if that calls for pity."

His answer was to stifle protests with greedy lips.

On the following morning Sir Harry awakened with an evil taste in his mouth, a headache, and suspicions of his mistress much augmented by a disordered liver. Declining breakfast, he betook himself to the anteroom, where, seated astraddle a cock-fighting chair, he moodily reviewed significant indications of Emily's guilt. With fingers drumming on the writing-board that projected from the chair-back, he rapidly counted the weeks since his return, and found they numbered no more than seven. . . . Like other *beaux*, he was prepared for mishaps *de galanterie*, but only a fool accepted responsibility for another man's bastard. . . .

Entering the room some minutes later, Emily was taken aback by a scowling reception. "I've brought a tumbler-glass of wormwood wine," she faltered; "it cures a rebellious liver to a wonder. Often my uncle Will'um gives a dose to a customer buying a bottle of spirits."

Rising angrily, Sir Harry spat into the fire. "I've no belief in rustic remedies, and if you know so much why don't ye concoct a draught for yourself? More than one wench in Hartung has avoided a *contretemps* by a brew from the Rogate witch."

Fear showed itself in Emily's lovely face. "What need have I to drink aught?" she cried defensively.

"That I'm determined to discover. I was a fool to trust you alone in town for fourteen weeks; but, by God, if I find you've been favouring another, ye need look no more to me."

Emily was silent. She watched him pull the bell-rope, and, when a lackey answered, listened to an order for the chaise.

Oppressed by anxiety, Emily wandered through the gardens and into the dairy, where she found distraction in showing a young maid the right way to work butter. Sounds of a carriage leaving the stables sent her racing back to the house.

Wearing a round hat and voluminous plum-coloured greatcoat, the baronet stood upon the steps, blinking at the weak November sunshine. After the night's debauch his eyes were bloodshot and his face pale and puffy; neither was his gait as steady as it might have been.

Seeing he meant to pass her by, Emily grasped the lapels of his coat. "What do you mean? Leaving me so sudden as if I had done you injury."

"And have ye not? "

Momentarily Emily shrank, then, gathering courage, she answered with a bold ring: "No more than you have done to me! 'Twas my body you wanted, not my heart, and my body you've had, as God knows! "

Roughly he shook himself free. "I've paid for the whole preserve, and if I prove there's been poaching, 'twill be the *pavé* for you, *Milady!* "

After the chaise had driven from the courtyard, Emily, too disturbed to return indoors, hurried past the west side of the mansion to the sward sloping from the southern façade. The chaise was still in sight, bowling along the drive on the far side of the ornamental lake. Sir Harry poked his head through the window; she waved, whereupon he disappeared.

For an hour or more she walked distractedly. It was no longer possible to doubt the catastrophe which faced her; she was undone and might soon be destitute. Help must be forthcoming somewhere—Greville, dear Greville, if he knew her need, would afford comfort. . . .

A plan rapidly shaped itself; she, too, would go to London, consult Dr. Graham, then to Greville, who would tell her what to do. With the prospect of action, her spirits rose; she was not the first girl to be unfortunate, and 'twould be sweet to have a baby with large, melancholy eyes and an aristocratic nose. . . . But what if her child

were sallow and agate-eyed like Jack Payne? . . . She thrust aside the possibility. Her baby should have fine features and a tiny black mole on the right cheek. . . . 'Twas what she wanted, and she would have it so. . . .

Inigorated by a snap of frost in the air, she buoyantly retraced her steps. On the hill-top the mellowed brick walls of Uppark, with quoins and window-dressings of stone, stood against a turquoise sky; sunlight, slanting upon the roof, discovered green lights in the Horsham stone; it showed also that the oblong slabs had been cut in many sizes and carefully graduated from gutters to fastigium. There was no denying it was a grand seat, but fine as it might be, she hoped after to-morrow never again to see it. . . .

It was no deterrent to Emily that her resources were limited to a crown and a few pence, because she planned to engage a post-chaise in Petersfield to be paid for in London. How to traverse five miles of muddy lanes in the small hours of morning was the problem that taxed invention. . . .

After eating her dinner, served in a perfunctory manner by the third footman, Emily, wrapped in a shawl, flitted through the long window of the saloon and passed unobtrusively round the house to the stables. Fortune favoured her; the only person to be seen was a lad turning the wheel of a chaff-cutter.

"Would you like to earn a crown?" she demanded.

"Aye!" His eyes goggled expectantly.

"Can you drive?"

"Surely!"

"And keep a secret?"

This time he showed less confidence. "You couldn't keep a secret for me?" she said incredulously.

"Reckon I cud." Blushing to the roots of his red hair, he gulped and stammered: "When I've seen 'ee about grounds and such, I've said to meself, I've said: 'I'd die for un, and gladly.'"

"Then you'll think it a trifle to get up at midnight and drive me secretly in the phaeton to Petersfield?"

"Reckon I can't taak phaaton, coachman keeps keys. Best I cud do wud be to saddle Polly; her's blind, but runs valiant if a cään of nails be rattled at un tail."

"But I couldn't get her back, for I'm posting on to London town."

The boy thought for a moment. "There's the old double saddle; I cud ride in front an' afterwards bring Polly hōame."

Emily and her humble escort left Uppark as the stable clock struck one; it was nearly three when they reached Petersfield. Half-way on their journey the girth broke, precipitating both riders to the ground. Happily it was a frosty night, and mud, scolled into ridges by heavy wheels, provided a hard if slippery foothold. By holding fast to the mare's bridle and walking gingerly, no further mishaps befell.

Emily had expected the 'Red Lion' to be open to night travellers, and was unprepared for shuttered windows and a bolted door. Eerie light from a waning moon intensified the aloof withdrawal of the sleeping town. She felt thrust out, a sojourner in the hinterland where ghosts dwell and people without beds are lost. Overwhelmed by unreasoning panic, she tugged at the bell and heard it jangle far away; the sound mingled with the slow clip-clop of the mare's hoofs receding along the turnpike road. Presently all was silent, and Emily stood alone in the moonlight.

The landlord's annoyance at being disturbed changed to a smirk upon recognizing his client. As she came from Uppark, he agreed to finance her journey to London, but professed inability to supply a vehicle other than a coach, which, in the present state of the roads, could not be drawn by less than two wheelers and a trace-horse.

Emily's face fell. " 'Twould cost a mint of money! "

"I'll work it out," remarked the landlord obligingly. She followed him through the hall to a tiny office abutting upon the yard, where she watched him make the following calculation on a slate.

		£	s.	d.		s.	d.
Wheelers and trace, Petersfield-Liphook .	8 Miles @	18	0		Pr boys	4	0
Wheelers and trace, Liphook-Godalming .	13 " "	1	9	3	" "	6	6
Wheelers and trace, Godalming-Ripley .	10 " "	1	2	6	" "	5	0
Wheelers and trace, Ripley-Kingston .	12 " "	1	7	0	" "	6	0
Wheelers and trace, Kingston-London .	12 " "	1	7	0	" "	6	0
Ostlers, 10 @ 6d.		5	0				
Ripley, Cobham, Kingston, Vauxhall 'Pikes							
each @ 9d.		3	0		£1	7	6
		<hr/>					
		£6	11	9			
Boys Bt. Forward		1	7	6			
		<hr/>					
		£7	19	3			

Emily was concerned for her dear Greville, who would settle the bill.

"I couldn't pay that, yet I must get to London as fast as possible. Can't I go with one postboy? "

"Not with a pair and a half of cattle, m'dear! "

"Oh, God, was ever a girl so unlucky? Can't you find an old chaise

anywhere? I care not how ramshackle 'tis, so it gets me cheap and quick to town."

The inn-keeper, clad only in cap and nightshirt, looked at her with a lewd and sympathetic eye. He was middle-aged, pale, fat and oily; his voice suety and confidential. "Want to follow the squire to make up a tiff? I noticed Sir Harry looked glum when he passed through in the forenoon."

Emily, nearly beside herself with anxiety and impatience, stamped her foot. "Can't you see I must go? Won't you help me instead of talking?"

Drawing nearer, he leant across the narrow table. His night-cap tassel swung across his broad, greasy nose, his shirt gaped, revealing a mat of black hair. "I'll tell ye what, m'dear: the coach can go with wheelers on every stage but the long one between Liphook and Godalming, when you must have a pair, a trace and a cupla boys." Taking up the slate, he obliterated with spittle his first calculation. "That'll bring the journey to five, nine, three, plus three and six for ostlers and three shillun for Turnpikes. Now, what'll you give me for arranging that so cheap, m'dear?"

"I've nothing," said Emily wearily.

He drew nearer. "What about a nice juicy kiss?"

"Good God, what do you take me for?"

"As pretty a flash-tail as ever I've seen! Come now, my gal, don't you pretend." He made a long arm and tried to grab her. Emily raised her hand and slapped his face. A red patch appeared on his cheek.

"Not so high and mighty, My Lady! I like spirit, but not too much; you come along over here and give me a taste of what Sir Harry has, then I'll help 'ee along, but behave haughty, and ye can walk to Lonnon like a strolling mort."

Emily was on the verge of tears. "Will you be satisfied with a kiss and no more?"

He grinned. "Maybe, but I'll make no promises."

Wearily Emily submitted her lips. Everything in life had its price. . . .

He pressed greedily upon her, driving her back against the table; feeling with his hands. Suddenly he drew back, his little eyes narrowed, his face wreathed itself in a wide smile. A husky giggle shook his fat paunch. "You're a sly one! My, you are! And Sir Harry in foreign parts since summer began!"

A shrill female voice called peremptorily from above; the landlord's face changed. Poking his head round the door he meekly shouted: "Coming, my love!" Then to Emily in a hurried aside: "I'll call the ostlers and get the boy up, and write a bill to go through, charging on account for your gennelman to pay when you reach London."

He did not take the rush-light, fortunately for Emily, who for an hour sat chafing amid carriage lamps, way-bills, harness and horse-cloths. When nearly despairing she heard a door creak in a distant part of the house, and a minute later watched a lanthorn bobbing towards the stables. Of the inn-keeper she saw no more until the coach, swinging out of the yard, rattled past the entrance, when she caught sight of him dimly silhouetted within the open door.

Instead of covering the fifty-five miles to London in approximately nine hours, Emily was on the road from four in the morning until three in the afternoon. The most jaded "cattle" were attached to the coach, driven by postilions lethargic as the horses. At the end of each stage the account from the 'Red Lion' was submitted and new charges added, the document being handed on with a wink by one postboy to another.

Dusk was already falling when the coach entered Battersea. Tenuous mist from the river floated across the low-lying ground; raw cold air filtered between the window-cracks, carrying with it a rank stench of Thames mud and the reek of bonfires smouldering in market-gardens. Travellers afoot and in carriages hurried to gain the town before darkness and its accompanying dangers found them in the lonely precincts of Vauxhall and Lambeth. By the time Emily's coach neared Westminster Bridge the light mist had consolidated into a grey haze through which Whitehall Palace, the Abbey and its towers, and the turrets and pinnacles of St. Stephen's Chapel, loomed shadowy and unsubstantial as structures on a transparency. Special watchmen appointed to the bridge were lighting bracket-lamps above the stone recesses and expelling vendors of roast chestnuts and baked potatoes who had established braziers in the alcoves. The appetizing smells rendered Emily frantic until she could open a window and toss her pennies on to the roadway. She tried to catch the potatoes as they were shied into the coach, but they hurtled past and burst upon the musty upholstery. Undaunted, she collected the fragments and ate ravenously as the vehicle rattled along Whitehall and into Pall Mall. Dr. Graham's phaeton stood outside Schomberg House; the

circumstance was opportune, but Emily's impatience to see Charles Greville made her postpone a consultation that could only confirm her fears.

By prudently keeping to frequented thoroughfares, the postboy was retarded by carriages and chairs of the *beau-monde*. People of fashion, having dined, were setting forth to receptions, the opera and the playhouses. Berkeley and Grosvenor Squares pulsed with orange light from scores of torches; ladies, wearing cloaks and calashes over brocaded sacques and prodigious head-dresses, tripped from their doors to be insinuated by beaux and flunkies into sedan-chairs too small to accommodate such wealth of whalebone and false hair.

As distance decreased between Emily and her goal, apprehensions grew proportionately. In remote Sussex it had seemed delightfully simple to tell dearest Charles of her fears and to appeal for aid; rumbling along the Tyburn Road with the gibbet looming against a silver sky the scheme appeared terrifying in its presumption. What could she say? How begin? Since Greville said farewell in August no line nor word had come from him. . . . Only a foolish maid could believe that tenderness and neglect marched together. . . . Emily's mouth felt dry; fear rose hot and oppressive in her breast. Ardently she began to hope the house would be closed and Greville far away. . . .

Portman Square, but partly built, was dark and lonely compared with older squares. On the north side a few large houses uprose against a background of fields and trees; empty sites were still tangled thickets, and the oval garden in the centre had as yet little claim to be other than a countrified waste. An oil lamp burning in a wrought-iron stanchion cast its curtsying light upon the flight of steps to No. 12; behind the fanlight the bland glow of wax candles revealed a fine stucco ceiling and gilded mouldings of picture-frames.

The postilion, dismounting, went to the horses' heads; Emily, after a tussle with the coach door, lowered herself gingerly to the ground. Her heart pounded sickeningly, her feet felt leaden and her limbs were limp and unreliable. But for the postboy, expectantly awaiting payment, she would have taken flight. . . .

She was obliged to make several attempts before her stammering inquiry was understood by the lackey who answered the bell. After hesitation he admitted her to the hall, and then vanished through a distant door. Only now that she was irrevocably committed was the enormity of her action fully patent. Good God! How had she come

to forget that Greville was different? Not a man to take liberties with, but an aristocrat who knew how to be remote and imperious. . . .

The footman emerged from the library and beckoned as he held the door ajar. Panic-stricken, but outwardly composed, Emily gained the threshold. At sight of Greville she caught her breath; never had he appeared so handsome, so fastidiously aloof from common ways of life. He wore dress-clothes of verd antique satin, the waistcoat richly embroidered down the fronts, the coat *brodé en plein et sur les coutures*. Shoe- and knee-buckles were of glittering stones; a diamond ring sparkled on his finger; a quizzing-glass in chased gold dangled on a moiré ribbon. His hair, newly pomaded and powdered, diffused the familiar fragrance that Emily found so pleasurably disturbing.

Advancing with outstretched hand, he bent upon her a searching glance. "My dearest girl, 'tis a pleasure to see you, though I cannot think you act wisely in coming. Had you sent word I would have contrived a meeting unprejudicial to your interests. Is Sir Harry in town?"

"Yes, but I know not where; I came up this day, secretly and alone. Oh, Greville, I had to see you; when you know what trouble I'm in you'll afford me comfort, I know you will!"

"'Tis always my intention to act your friend," he answered in suave, non-committal tones. Walking to the chimney-piece, he stood with his back to the fire and a convex mirror; the glass reflected his shapely head, it also showed Emily in a distant vista diminished to a minikin.

"Sir Harry has come to London to learn if I took a lover when he was away."

"What makes him suspect?"

Emily bent her head so low that her curls drooped and screened her face. "Because my baby will be born too soon for him to believe 'tis his."

Greville's expression did not change. "You were imprudent, my dear Emily, in driving about so openly with Willett Payne. All the town must know you were living together, and 'twill not be difficult for Sir Harry to obtain defamatory evidence. Is your maid loyal and discreet?"

"Mary Mudge is rough, but a truer friend there couldn't be."

"If she proves staunch you may be able to steer a course that will bring you to safety, for 'tis essential to keep friends with Sir Harry, as you can expect no aid from a sea officer who sails God knows whither."

Sanguine hope was arrested; Emily's heart became a leaden weight that, with each beat, drove a sharp barb into her breast. "Dear, dearest Greville, can't you afford me better comfort?"

"To advise you to quarrel with your protector would be to suggest a line of heroics contrary to your interest. In your present state you cannot seek new connexions, but by prudence and good conduct you may hope to restore Sir Harry's esteem."

Emily was about to denounce a policy alien to her nature when a violent banging on the hall door forestalled indignant speech. With total misgivings she remembered the coach and postboy waiting without. Bracing herself, she informed Greville of the fact.

"Do I understand you engaged a private coach without means to pay for it?" he demanded incredulously.

Viewing her act through his eyes, she saw its enormity and wrung her hands. "I had to come, Greville, I was nearly frantic." The plea caused no amelioration in his demeanour and she was driven to elaborate: "I thought if I saw Dr. Graham he might do something."

An impatient shrug was Greville's response. Crossing the room, he opened the door, listened, and vanished into the hall. Emily heard the postboy's complaining whine rise above his level tones.

He returned with the bill from the 'Red Lion.' "Charges for post-horses, postilions, ostlers and so forth amount to five guineas and half-a-guinea. Is that correct?"

Emily's agreement was hardly audible. Going to his desk, Greville unlocked a cashbox and counted out the money; then he prepared to write a formal receipt. To do this he had to sweep aside specimens of spar, crystal, sulphur, lava and uncut gems, and to lift from danger a valuable new purchase—Ellis's Portable Microscope.

Never had Emily felt so humble, so crushed by results of impetuosity. Far better 'twould have been to fling herself into the lake at Uppark and end all love and trouble. . . .

After paying the postilion, Greville made no further reference to the incident of the coach, but his abstention censured more surely than rebuke. "Are you staying at Hart Street, Emily?"

"I hadn't thought where I'd sleep," she confessed, "but likely I'll manage to creep in by the area and get Mary to hide me till morning."

"You mean Sir Harry will be there? Then ye cannot go! If he discovers you have followed to London, your fate is sealed."

With nervous, quick strides Greville paced between the door communicating with the dining-room and the wall whereon Correggio's

Venus hung between cream-painted pilasters. Shoe- and knee-buckles flashed as they caught the light; his silk stockings made a rich, stretching sound with every step. "You've been unwise," he muttered, "terribly unwise."

Too ashamed to speak, Emily sat drooping in her chair.

"You must return to Uppark without delay, but at best we cannot hope for a seat in the stage before the day after to-morrow. Until then we must engage an obscure lodging, and, should you decide to consult Graham, wear a calash and take a hackney-coach."

"I will do whatever you say, for I know 'tis right," Emily humbly responded.

After further deliberation, Greville conferred with his elderly cook, introducing Emily as Mrs. Duggan's daughter, accidentally stranded in London. Graciously flattering: "You will know where to find suitable accommodation better than I. Somewhere clean and respectable in a quiet street."

Emily's plight evoked instant sympathy, and she was hospitably conducted to the basement. She felt utterly wretched, but a hot fire and a meal of chitterlings and porter revived her sufficiently to exert herself to please. Her beauty, lovely voice and friendly, easy manner wrought their usual spell. To show herself in harmony with her company, she embarked upon a description of service with Mrs. Budd, only to discover she remembered little about a nurse-maid's duties. In return she was told of household economies enforced by Greville and of the attentions he paid to the daughters of his next-door neighbour.

"The Honourable Misses Willoughby, Dorothy and Henrietta," the cook explained, "each with a fortune of thirty thousand pound."

Emily was disturbed by the queer, foggy appearance of the kitchen and the frightening aspect of the footman, who had lost half his face. The cook's voice boomed like a foghorn, and then receded into the distance. "This night our master accompanies Lord and Lady Middleton and their elder daughter to a rout at the Duchess of Cumberland's; that's why he wears the suit he got for the King's birthday. . . ."

"It's the Honourable Henrietta he's after," shouted the footman.

"She's but fifteen," the cook scoffed in a whisper.

Some time later Emily was surprised to find herself lying on the hearth-rug with a burnt feather held to her nose. Dutifully she accepted a spoonful of brandy. "What a fright you gave us!" said the cook querulously.

Thanks to the potency of Greville's cognac, Emily made a rapid recovery and was able to accompany the servants to the area, where, balanced on the edge of a Roman urn, they watched Lord Middleton's party leave No. 13. Emily nearly swooned again on seeing Greville looking gravely into the eyes of the homely heiress as he conducted her to the coach. The footman chuckled derisively: "He's wily, flattering the plain one so he may meet the pretty lass."

That night Emily lay snugly in a room over a bakery in Marylebone Lane, but only her body rested. Round and round her thoughts danced, monotonously grinding like the recurring tinkle-tinkle of a hurdy-gurdy. Why had Greville acted as if her child could not be his? How was it he appeared to forget they had been lovers? Did he mean to forsake her? No! She would not believe it! . . . Greville, dearest Greville, who was superior to all other men, could never act so base! . . . He told her to keep friends with Sir Harry only to test her affection. . . . To-morrow he would show himself kind, thoughtful and helpful in her distress. . . . Having cozened herself into optimism, she fell into uneasy sleep, darkened by threatening dreams.

In the morning as she ate her breakfast in the little parlour, hope received a fillip when Greville's footman, resplendent in blue livery laced with silver, delivered a note carried in a cleft wand. Out of the wrapper fluttered three pound notes and a slip of paper worded thus:

"My dear Girl, the position in which you have placed yourself causes me grave concern, and it must be my endeavour to avert the consequences of your imprudence. My man has orders to engage a seat for to-morrow in the Portsmouth Coach. I will bring the ticket this night, or news of his failure to secure a place. The money inclosed will be needed if ye visit G. In my experience gentlemen who claim to cure all ills, demand fees proportionate to their pretensions. Adieu, and believe me yours most faithfully, C.F.G."

With spirits elevated by this manifestation of interest, Emily procured a hackney-coach and in it repaired to Schomberg House. She was fortunate in finding Dr. Graham on the premises, supervising alterations to the electrico-magnetic throne.

"Your protector was here yesterday inquiring how ye behaved in his absence. I replied: 'So far as I know, better than a man need expect who leaves a lovely young woman to live alone in Covent Garden.'"

"You were kind!"

"Bah! A rake should know something of human nature, yet he invariably demands angelic qualities in women."

The doctor's examination was embarrassing, thorough, conclusive; he offered no sympathy, but declined a fee and hinted at re-employment if Emily's looks survived her lying-in.

From Pall Mall she proceeded to Hart Street, and, after a cautious reconnaissance, hurried down the area steps. Mary Mudge, in hat and cloak, stood by a table trying to cram all her possessions into an old bolster-case. Her eyes were swollen and her nose red and shining from frequent polishing with a harsh handkerchief.

She gaped and then ejaculated: "Goodness, Emy! Does Sir Harry know you've come?"

"No, and you're not to tell! Why is there no fire on a cold day? and what are you doing with your gownds?"

"Packing 'em, turned out!" Mary sniffed. "All the lovely furniture is to be sold, and I'm to go with no more than my clothes and what I stand up in."

"No wages?"

"Nothing! 'Tis because I won't tell of your goings on with the Capting and the other one."

"Dear Mary; indeed I'm thankful to you for being true!"

Praise recalled to Mary her sacrifices. "To my ruin!" she muttered: "not a shillun have I had since you paid me last August."

"Three months owing?"

"Thirty-five shillun! What I'm to do without it, Christ knows!"

From her bosom Emily took a couple of pound notes. "I'd give you more could I spare it, but indeed I know not which way to turn, seeing Sir Harry may cast me off."

Mary's face looked quite cheerful as she thrust the money inside her stocking. "Sooner or later 'twas bound to come, but it doesn't signify while you keep your looks, for you are one of the sort that likes *changel*!"

Emily felt unreasonably hurt. "I'd never alter, could I but follow my heart."

"If you does that or acts as usual, I'll be ready to be your maid!" While Mary spoke a vehicle drew up; a key turned in the front door, footsteps proceeded to the stair-head. "Sir Harry," she announced.

Emily was the first to reach the street; together the girls hurried to the cross-way. "I'll bide with Ephraim's mother till New Year," said

Mary, anxiously glancing back. "You'll know where to find me—No. 3 Green Arbour Court." As fugitives they kissed and parted; Mary to trudge with her bundle to the City, Emily to seek a hackney-coach in Covent Garden.

Greville fulfilled his promise after the bakery was closed and the family were in bed. From the rounded shop window Emily saw his lantern swinging like a will-o'-the-wisp over the vacant building-sites. Going to the door, she withdrew the bolt and waited. He entered silently, laying his hand on her shoulder as he passed. Nervously she followed to the tiny parlour. The iron lantern provided the only light, a pattern of heavy bars and illumined squares projected upon a sea of shadows.

Discarding his cloak and cocked hat, Greville smoothed his hair and impatiently tightened the ribbon. "Your coach leaves Golden Cross at half-past six, so ye must be up betimes; my man calls here soon after five."

She leant against one of the large wooden flour-bins built from the wall. After a little hesitation Greville approached and sat sideways with one leg cocked on the slanting lid. His deep-set, melancholy eyes gazed upon the perfect outline of Emily's downcast face; he drew his breath sharply and bit his lip.

"You may think me harsh in advising you to cultivate Sir Harry's regard, and to lull by your submissive attentions any doubts he may entertain. But you are not in a position to pick and choose, and your child must be considered."

Emily turned her anguished face. "Greville, 'tis not his! "

He was taken aback, but immediately rallied. "Having run the gauntlet, you cannot be sure of the father, and by your bad conduct to both Sir Harry and myself you are entitled only to such help as ye deserve. Thus my advice is sound: seek by good behaviour to preserve your friends." With this remark Greville rose and walked to the table where lay his hat and cloak.

Envisaging a hopeless future, Emily could no longer maintain the restraint she had imposed on herself. Rushing forward, she flung herself on her knees before him and clasped his hands. "Oh, Greville, dear Greville, don't desert me, for I know not what I shall do without a friend. Indeed, whatever I have done to offend you, I regret, for I value no one's good opinion more than yours." Her tears rained hotly on his hands. Looking down at her tawny ringlets, he saw also the soft nape of her neck and the bewitching curves of her shoulders.

"Emily!" he panted with a sharp edge of fear in his voice. She got up slowly, raising her head as she did so until she looked straight into his eyes. "Greville, dear Greville," she whispered.

He tried to draw back, could not, and in a moment strained her in his arms. Emily's grief and despair fell away like a burdensome garment; she was saved, for Greville loved her. . . .

"Dear heart," she breathed.

Gently but firmly Greville took her shoulders and pushed her from him. White and panting, he leaned for support against the table. "You shouldn't have made me do that—'tis not honourable, and only injures us. Till we see how we stand we must subdue passion. I tell ye frankly, Emily, until Sir Harry has refused to provide for you I can take no step. Even then I must be assured you are free of every other connexion." As he spoke he fastened the clasps of his cloak.

Frightened and surprised, Emily watched happiness tumble like a house of cards. "Then I'm left forlorn. . . ."

"Nonsense, dear girl," Greville rallied her with trembling lips. From his coat pocket he produced a packet of papers which he unfolded. "As evidence of my concern I leave with you six franked covers addressed to myself. You are to keep them carefully and not let them be seen by anyone. By this means you may keep me informed of your movements and prospects."

"Is that all the comfort you can give?"

"When I am sure you are cured of caprice I may offer to help you, but so long as you are under Sir Harry's protection I cannot move one step."

He was already in the little shop, skirting the counter to the door. His lantern cast a yellow disc on the ceiling and threw his shadow upon the wall. Quietly Emily unbolted the door and held it open. He passed her, but paused upon the step. "My man has your coach ticket and will see to your needs. In a few days I myself set forth—to Pembroke on my uncle's business."

The intelligence caused Emily to feel more utterly forsaken. "If I posted a letter you would not get it?"

"My absence will only be a matter of weeks; and separation is the same if distance be measured in yards or miles. 'Tis only the mind that forces comparisons. By training yourself to a philosophical outlook you may yet be happy." Taking her hand, he raised it to his lips. "Adieu, my dearest Emily!"

"Farewell," she whispered.

Rapidly he walked from her across the frosted grass towards the elm trees that spread finely netted branches against a moonlit sky. An owl shrieked eerily from a near-by barn; from the Islington Road sounded a coach horn and the sharp ring of hoofs slowing down at the Turnpike. Smaller and smaller glimmered the light in Greville's lantern; it vanished. . . .

Emily's journey to Petersfield passed without incident, and her return to Uppark occasioned less astonishment than fear had conjured. The stone entrance hall, and the large rooms opening one into another, tolerated her with the same chill indifference as did the servants in their separate building. From the long windows of the saloon, starkly undraped because the Queen Anne curtains were drawn up into gilded pelmets, she looked upon a vista of white lawns and rime-clad trees, to frosted woods receding into blue-grey haze. Mansion, servants and park united in an atmosphere of frozen detachment that was yet electrically awaiting a drama delayed. . . .

Emily was not supremely unhappy, because her mental faculties were uncultivated and her eyes were too young to reach distant horizons. Her anxieties embraced the present and a near future; beyond was halcyon calm and Greville, both obtainable if correct rules were observed. The untutored could not expect to understand the tortuous scruples of the gentry who demanded that reconciliation must be attempted before a lover could honourably take a mistress from her protector. But so it was, and who was Emy Lyon to wonder at the ways of a gentleman? . . .

When Sir Harry returned after ten days' absence in town he gave her no opportunity to practise the sophistries recommended by Greville.

"Damme, Emily!" he shouted, "I've found ye out in enough whoring to get you whipped at the cart tail!"

She blenched, but held her ground and answered confidently: "You can't have heard aught from anyone who knows, for I made no friends when you were in foreign parts."

"Ye forget you're known to half the town, and if ye drive about up-perched in a high-flyer with a public man, there'll be many to notice and draw conclusions."

Emily sighed in relief that Greville had escaped attention, forgetting that his prudence had minimized all risk.

"Anyway, argue how you will, you can't get away from this!" Sir Harry triumphantly slapped a dirty letter on the table before her.

For a moment Emily looked at it without comprehension, then in a flash she recalled the cock-fight and the midshipman to whom she entrusted the missive so inconveniently returned.

"'Twas written eleven months ago, and given to me by young Bacon because he had not the opportunity to deliver it. Have ye anything to say?"

"Only that you'd no right to open it! Sure, 'twas given to you to return to me."

Such effrontery rendered the baronet in danger of apoplexy. "Upon my soul, you've got a harlot's insolence! You started as Jack Payne's strumpet, and ye've never been anything else, and now you think to foist his bastard on me. But there you're mistaken, my Lady! To-morrow ye leave with me for London, and the day after travel to Wales, with no money in your pocket to bring you back. I only wish I could ship ye to Willett Payne!"

Emily felt stunned. Greville had made it plain he accepted no responsibility for her plight, and any help he gave would be compassionate and voluntary. Exiled at Hawarden, what assurance had she that her influence would last? . . . London was full of pretty women, heiresses with thirty thousand pounds. . . .

"Don't send me to Hawarden, oh, don't!" she cried, tears raining down her face. "Give me just a little money to manage on until I can work again, and I'll promise not to trouble you more. Indeed, if you don't heed my prayers I am undone and anything may happen. You wouldn't want my death on your conscience, and I warn you solemn that it may be if you send me from London."

He walked to the door. "I don't care! Damned if I do!"



CHAPTER NINETEEN

BUT for Dame Kidd's resourcefulness, news of Emily's dishonoured and impoverished condition must speedily have spread through every hamlet from Hawarden to Ferry.

"The one to fear is your Aunt Sarah," said Mrs. Kidd decisively. "Quick she is, like me, and sees cracks before the story is told. Lucky we are that Michael Connor was let out at Michaelmas; when he's locked in the madhouse Sarah goes on the prowl, wearing out her restlessness by poking and prying."

Spent and sick after two days in the coach, Emily lay in the box-like bed fitting across the end of the kitchen. She watched her grandmother boiling locks of hair in a skillet held over the fire, and, with a long iron spoon, skimming nits as they rose to the surface.

"Poor tresses, poor tresses," the old woman murmured, "and the widower, dear soul, hopes for three bracelets to give to his tiny daughters. After hacking, only enough hairs there'll be for a Prince of Wales's feathers."

Dame Kidd was famed on both banks of the Dee for her memorial mementoes in hairwork. Such ambitious designs as the Basket of Flowers and the Tomb and Willow Tree were not beyond her skill; on one great occasion she had executed quite a large picture of a schooner from the golden hair of a bride who died when waiting for the Dublin packet-boat to sail from Parkgate. The reward for this masterpiece had been two guineas; ordinarily she considered herself fortunate if she received as many shillings. Her clients were country folk, nearly as poor as herself; often she gave her work and made a loss on the opal tablet and gold-thread mountings. Her heart, like Emily's, ruled her head.

Tormented by her thoughts, Emily tossed restlessly in the narrow bed. Suddenly she sat up, looked into space with wild, staring eyes.

"Granny, Granny," she cried, "what can I do if neither Sir Harry nor Greville will help me?"

"They will, bach, they will," the old woman replied with the happy confidence of the unworldly.

"I'll write letters," said Emily, buoyed up by fresh hope.

While she sat by the table laboriously writing on a sheet of white wrapping-paper, Mrs. Kidd sallied forth in her brown fringed shawl and tall Welsh hat to tell her son and daughters of Emily's arrival.

With the closing of the street door on the small, active figure a brooding silence settled upon the overcrowded kitchen, the vigilant waiting of inanimate things that have become magnetically charged through long and loving usage. Standing on the chimney-piece were three wooden egg-cups, a coggie, a sellar and a flour-dredger, all with the individuality of home-carved articles handed on from generation to generation. The corner cupboard was made by Emily's grandfather from an oak tree he felled when a forester at Ewloe Castle; the chairs had been slim larches that Dame Kidd knew as a young serving-maid tripping through her master's woods at Nanteribba. Other things had an intimate identity with Emily: a little stool contrived from a firkin by her Uncle Nichol; a box covered with shells by Mrs. Ladmore, who let lodgings at Parkgate to gentry awaiting the winds and tides.

In the familiar surroundings Emily's recent experiences appeared unreal as a dream; only her fashionable gown and the discomforts of her body proved the impossible to be true. Sighing, she again applied herself to an appeal to Sir Harry:

"Ohnly 20 pound would do to help me over. For God's sake send something soon, for my grammother cannot keep me hear without mony and I have non and nowhear to get but hear. O dear Sir H. dow send me something if it is only a little, and beleve me yours most faithfully *Emly*."

She addressed the letter to Branston Hall near Leicester; Sir Harry's destination after he had seen her safely away in the Holyhead coach. Lacking wafers, she glued the paper together with flour and water before turning to the more congenial task of writing to Greville. Words ran easily from her pen:

"I wright to inform you of my movments and prosspecks as we agreed. From the address you will see whear I have gott, and of

prosspecks there is none. Sir H. sent me awhay without a minets warning & with no cloaths but wot I stood up in & only enough mony to buy food on the whay, and not realy enough for I arived hungry. Now I have wrote to ask him to send me some guineas which is only rite. As the whay is clear & I am no longer under anyboddies protexion, pray tell me my dear Charles what to dow. In a day or 2 I shall see Sophi who will pleed to hear everything about Someone we both know. For endead she thinks we are marrid, Grevell, and I shall not underceive her. I am calling myself Mrs. Hart as it will make it better with my freinds who would wunder about the baby with no husban to make it wright. God bless you & write to me dear G. Adué and beleve me *affectionately and truly yours, Emly Hart.*"

After carefully folding her letter to show the franked address to "The Honble Mr. Greville, Portman Square, London, M.P.," Emily kissed the writing and propped the packet against a horn mug the better to admire Greville's calligraphy.

Mrs. Kidd returned as dusk fell, well pleased with the tale she had circulated. As she hung up her hat and shawl she vivaciously recounted her adventures. "First I went to your Aunt Ann Reynolds, where I found James Nichol over from Great Soughall to see Sophy; then I went on to Mrs. Newcome and Mrs. Humphries. Your Uncle Kidd and young Thomas I met near the Cross; all of them I told how you'd come home on a short holiday because your health wouldn't allow you to cross the sea to your husband who was visiting the King of France."

"They'll know 'tis a lie, because England and France are at war."

Mrs. Kidd looked crestfallen, but soon brightened. "If I didn't know, how should they? The American rebels I thought we were fighting; but I wish now I'd said Mr. Greville Hart had gone to the King of Holland."

"We're at war with Holland," Emily answered dolorously.

"*Duwich*, gal, then what country is England at peace with, whatever?"

"God knows!"

"Well, anyway, I told them all you'd come home with a heavy purse, and surprised I should be if there wasn't presents for everyone and a party with Chaney tea."

"Foolish you were to say that, for I haven't a penny to bless myself with."

"But pretend we must; if they guess you're poor they'll know you're no wife, but some gentleman's spoiling. We must pretend, gal, we must pretend." Rolling her sleeve to her elbow, Mrs. Kidd climbed on a chair and groped up the chimney. She dislodged a quantity of soot before she discovered a pewter measure hidden in a crevice. Carrying it to the table, she turned it upside down; soot, pennies and silver pieces fell upon the scrubbed wood.

Emily watched her grandmother's familiar hands; thin, brown, work-worn, with veins like gnarled trees. Old, kind hands. . . .

Emily's tears began to fall. Splashing into the soot, they formed large black blisters. . . .

"Don't cry, bach, don't cry! You know how much I'm lovin' you. . . ."

"Oh, Granny, Granny!" Emily's vivid golden head drooped like a broken flower; an old hand stroked the tangled curls. "It will all come right, bach, all come right!"

"I'm not crying for myself," Emily sobbed.

"Then there's foolish you are, for there's naught else to cry over!"

Yielding against her conscience to Dame Kidd's insistence, Emily took the old woman's savings to Chester. For Sarah Connor she bought a packet of snuff; Ann Reynolds and her little Sarah shared a work-box between them. She chose a tooth-pick in a steel case for her Aunt Kidd, thread stockings for Uncle William Kidd and for each of her uncles by marriage. Selecting a gift for Sophy was more difficult, and she hesitated long between a tape measure that recoiled into a beehive, or a drab shawl that she knew would not please. Eventually she chose the shawl. . . .

Fortified by these tokens of prosperity, she called on each of her relations, all of whom appeared cordially to welcome gifts and donor; only in retrospect was there anything equivocal in their geniality.

"Aunt Sarah said I must be clever to have wedded both a sea officer and a courtier in attendance on the King. And she spoke silky, Gran, as people do who mean double what they say."

"Even if she did, there's naught she can prove of Sophy's tales if we stand firm till word comes by post."

But the days sped and became a week—three weeks—nearly a month—yet no message allayed Emily's rising panic. After a fortnight of waiting she wrote twice weekly to Sir Harry, incoherent tirades, demanding money, beseeching protection, threatening reprisals, prophesying suicide; letters she had to post at Chester, a

twelve-mile tramp there and back along a bad turnpike road that alternated between a morass and a glacier, according to the weather. For company she had her cousin, Sarah Reynolds, a sturdy child of six, insufficiently clad in a blue cotton dress and a small homespun shawl, who plodded uncomplainingly on a self-appointed pilgrimage. Emily took little notice of her faithful satellite. Goaded by fear and despair, she ruthlessly drove her flinching body through blasts of sleet, over slippery mud and dangerous ice, soliciting the salvation of a dishonoured maid, an accident.

"Don't bach, don't," her grandmother pleaded. "You may kill yourself as well as murder the poor little babby."

"God! I wish I could!"

"Why don't you write again to Mr. Greville? 'Stead of pestering Sir Harry when you care naught for him."

"Because nothing I could say would alter Mr. Greville's mind. If he casts me off I must submit; and if I cannot die I must live—someways."

More than once Emily and Sarah were overtaken by Michael Connor, whose long legs, thin and shapeless as a pair of compasses, transported him at a prodigious rate. His well-cut cloth coat, once a rich bottle green, but faded by sun and adverse weather to the colour of the Dee sands, clung threadbare to his gaunt body. He was tall, and walked with hunched shoulders and bent head. Bright round eyes, a beaky nose and thick raven-like hair sweeping backwards from his brow accentuated a pronounced likeness to a needy and dishevelled crow. His hands, thin and skinny as talons, were thrust for warmth into his breeches pockets, beneath his arm was a *flute d'amour* and round his neck a brown knitted muffler with tassels on the ends that blew out upon the wind.

On seeing Emily he would stop, bow, and raise her numbed red hand to his lips. "A beautiful woman should be mounted upon a pedestal for men to worship; her dainty feet should rest upon alabaster; incense, kindled by virgins, should waft about her head. Ye should not be bruised by the stones of our highway, Emma, neither should thy raiment be profaned by its mire!"

"I'd be content with a pair of pattens, or even shoes that 'ud hold out the wet."

"Ye'd need neither were the farming of the turnpikes abolished. A contractor in Manchester is getting fifty thousand a year out of

gate-holding, and what does he do for it?" Michael Connor came nearer and glared with a mad gleam in his eyes. "Look at this pike road and answer! Eh—eh—what does he do for it?"

"Some old men get wages for breaking stones."

"Bah! Stones in Flint! D'ye know what comes of breaking stones in Flint?"

"Holes are mended in soft ground."

"That's what ye think." He came so close that Emily saw a powdering of dandruff on the shoulders of his faded coat and a network of fine veins in his cheeks. With a long, bony finger he tapped her arm confidentially. "Horses' legs are broken; they are killed and their carcasses sold to enrich posting-masters. Wheels within wheels, Emma, wheels within wheels!"

Sarah Kidd had risen above her station when she married the son of Patrick Connor, reputed smuggler, and owner of "Connah's Quay," two miles below Ferry. In the substantial stone dwelling looking over the estuary to the green shore of Wirral, Sarah kept house in a hugger-mugger fashion until the bleak winter morning when her hard-drinking old father-in-law was found with his brass-buckled shoes poking out of the quick-sands; a disaster she had to cope with during her husband's annual visit to the county madhouse. Before his return she migrated to a cottage at Ferry and enrolled herself in the flourishing cockle trade. Thereafter, her business aptitude and Michael Connor's skill on the flute should have kept them comfortably.

When Emily returned to Hawarden, her Aunt Sarah had two children alive, six in the churchyard and three buried under the hawthorn hedge; fecundity which vetoed prosperity. Mistress of insinuation and half speeches, Sarah Connor soon cast doubts upon her niece's rich marriage. Relations and friends began to look askance, Sophy's tales that had received no credence were touched upon with a knowing air: Where were the fine clothes proper for a gentleman's young wife? . . . No letters came, yet Emy was known to post many. . . . "And doesn't young Reynolds in the Chester post office say she addresses them to Sir Harry Somebody, and not to any Mr. Hart? . . . And who is Captain Payne? . . . Sophy spoke truth, there is no doubt of that. . . . Far be it from me to suggest anything, but who is Sir Harry, and is there a Mr. Hart?"

The approach of Christmas reduced Emily's spirits to a low ebb;

no answer had been elicited by any of the six letters dispatched to Sir Harry, and only cowardice made her deny Greville's defection. She felt ill, too, the victim of curious pains and perpetual hunger. Dry bread and buttermilk was all that Mrs. Kidd could provide; work she had in plenty, but small hope of payments until the spring plantings. What would they do with no savings to fall back upon? . . . Good God, what *could* they do? . . .

Driven by fresh panic, Emily sat down and wrote a seventh letter. Feeling ill and wretched, she set off to post it; the way to Chester had never seemed so long, so cold or so dreary. On either hand stretched greyish, half-frozen fields veined with pewter streams. Here and there uprose clumps of black trees and stark walls of farm buildings; on the northern horizon towers of the cathedral, the castle and the church of St. John stood in sombre silhouette against a lowering sky. Several times Emily had to press into the hedge to avoid struggling horses and big coach wheels which, as they lumbered in and out of ruts, threw up waves of mud and ice. Turkeys, geese, game, venison, bulky packages, and bunches of holly and mistletoe loaded every vehicle; sometimes Emily caught glimpses of the gentry tossing within—fine aristocratic faces that paid no heed to a girl mired and shivering in a ditch. Their indifference kindled smouldering anger: who were they to scorn Emy Lyon? . . . Emy Lyon whose voice and attitudes had entranced fashionable London. . . . And would again. . . . Some day she'd have them all humbled and the proudest on their knees. . . .

The resolve revived self-esteem and carried her forward with something of her old buoyancy. Visions of future triumphs obscured the bleak horizon; misery was banished by happiness to come.

She spent some time in Chester, looking into shop windows decked with holly; near the castle she was attracted by a crowd and a blare of trumpets to a stage wherefrom a handsome mountebank dispensed nostrums at sixpence a packet while his merry-andrew skipped and grimaced. The gay spectacle further fortified Emily's spirits, and she returned to Hawarden in a mood to anticipate a change of fortune. On approaching her grandmother's cottage a gleam of pale sunshine pierced the dark clouds, brought colour to the old thatch and life to locks of hair drying on a string across the whitewashed wall; an augury of hope substantiated when Dame Kidd came to the door excitedly waving a packet.

Momentarily Emily was too overcome to break the seals; when she

recovered she unwrapped a copy of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October and a short note from Greville. He began by wishing her happiness, whether she returned to Sir Harry's protection or followed another course:

"Your situation must awaken you to the folly of pursuing a reckless path and to the necessity of retrieving past errors by prudence and good conduct. You will recall, my dearest Emily, that I desired you, when occasion offered, to verify the date of your baptism from the register of your parish church. I confess to thinking you older than you and your mother suppose; a certificate signed by the clergyman would establish your age and put me in a better position to consider your future."

Joy blinded Emily to the ambiguity of Greville's letter; it sufficed that he evinced interest. After listening to the guarded sentences, Dame Kidd expressed surprise.

"Gentlemen of noble birth don't speak out like common folk," Emily answered defensively: "they go about and about, making certain before showing their meaning."

"*Duwch*, gal, I know more of the nobility than you, seeing I served the first Viscount of all England. Lord Hereford always spoke his mind straight and honourable, no shuffling with *him*." Mrs. Kidd emphasized her point by snapping the pinching-irons on a curl and holding them over a candle until the hair sizzled. The criticism so provoked Emily that she subsided into sulky silence, which lasted until they went to bed.

She rose at dawn, determined upon an immediate visit to Great Neston church, an all-day excursion that involved crossing the estuary. The kitchen was bitterly cold, and she shuddered as she walked over icy flags to the window; the shutters gave reluctantly and revealed Hawarden Highway transformed by deep snow-drifts into a miniature mountain range. This reverse of fortune plunged Emily into deepest gloom; a girl in such an unhappy position had no time for shilly-shallying. . . .

All day feathery flakes hovered and fell, obscuring light and view; all day a dip burnt on the kitchen table to illuminate the difficult process of turning a hank of neglected hair into the Prince of Wales's feathers mounted on an opal tablet and garnished with two ears of golden barley, filigree work and three pearls. While her grandmother

toiled, Emily repaired the household pen and sat down to write to Greville in a strain indicative of returning panic:

"My Dear Grevell

yesterday did I Receve your kind Letter, it Put me in some spirits for Believe me I am all most distracktid. I have Never hard from Sir H and he is not at Lechster now I am sure, what shall I Dow Good God what shall I Dow I have wrote 7 letters and No anser. I can't come to town for want of mony. I have not a farthing to Bless my self with and I think my friends Looks cooly on me. I think so. O—G—what shall I Dow What shall I Dow. O how your Letter affected me wen you wishd me happiness O G that I was in your Posesion as I was in Sir H What a happy Girl would I have Been. girl indeed, What else am I But a Girl in Distres in Reall distress for God's sake G write the minet you Get this and only tell me what I have to Dow. Direct some Whay I am allmos Mad O for God's sake tell me What is to become of me. O dear Grevell Write to me. Write to me G. adue and Believe yours for ever. *Emily Hart.*

Don't tell my mother What distress I am in and Dow afford me some Comfort."

This epistle, folded and placed in the bible, was destined to lie through a week of rigorous weather. Imprisoned in the cottage, Mrs. Kidd worked at boiling, hacking, and piping hair on the jigger, while Emily read aloud from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, beginning with the Parliamentary Debates and letters to Mr. Urban and ending with remarks on the first volume of Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. Although Emily skipped the long words, both she and her grandmother felt themselves much improved by such high-class fare, and regretted when nothing remained but obituary notices. This mournful catalogue turned out to be unexpectedly interesting: "Of the bite of a mad dog in Rathbone Place, Mr. John Archer Velner, who, on the death of an aged relation in Berkshire, would have been possessed of about £1,400 per ann. . . . At Portsmouth, of a mortification in his bowels, Ensign Swiney of the Surrey Reg: . . . At Salisbury, Dr. Nisbet, late of Nevis in the West Indies. 5th Oct: 1781."

The announcement recalled the gaunt figure of Josiah Nisbet and his arrogant, dark wife as they stood beside the palings in Hyde Park.

"That'll pay her!" Emily observed with satisfaction. "A more disagreeable woman I never met, and 'tis certain her charms won't get her another husband."

Dame Kidd gummed a curl and set it to dry beneath an ivory counter and a sugar-loaf weight before inquiring: "D'you mean Mrs. Velner, bach?"

"'Twas Dr. Nisbet's name caught my eye, and I'm sorry for him, though I daresay he'd sooner be in heaven than down here tied to so rude and managing a creature."

"Understand we never can, what men see in other women."

"There's naught to see in Frances Nisbet, but likely there's no choice in the West Indies. She'd be wise to go back."

After five days of intermittent storms, snow lay banked above the cottage window. A thaw set in on Christmas Eve, but only the intrepid ventured forth; Emily and her grandmother would have fared badly but for the doctor's wife, who sent a gift of fresh pork by her son Leigh, a twelve-year-old lad who adventurously floundered over the drifts on boards attached to his shoes.

"Maybe Mrs. Thomas would take you back into her service if there's no other way."

"What kind of a servant should I make after the life I've lived?"

"But a poor one, I'm afraid, bach."

Emily had to wait until the last day of the year before the roads were sufficiently clear for an expedition to Great Neston. She was fortunate in getting a lift in a waggon to Ferry; leaving Hawarden before daylight, she reached the Dee as the rising sun dappled the steely water with crimson. Clouds, like a flamingo's wing, extended across the sky; here and there a rosy wisp floated away and gradually vanished.

The Connors' slated cottage stood with its gable to the river and faced the ferry landing, a stony creek at the bottom of a steep lane. While waiting for the boatman to row over from Wirral, Emily looked into the kitchen where her Aunt Sarah ladled shrimps from a boiling cauldron into a crock on the floor. She could see the tear-stained faces of her cousins, Mary Ann and Sarah, aged five and four, whose painful task it was to shell the shrimps while hot, a process that preserved them whole and secured the highest price.

Emily was the sole passenger to the peninsula; prudent travellers delayed making journeys until they could proceed along the sands at low tide. Emily's impatience compelled her to go by the military road, a neglected lane running through King's Wood to Shotwick Church; thence by pack-horse track through Puddington and Ness. For seven miles she encountered no human being apart from the

grisly remains of a man hanging from Powis Lane gibbet. She arrived exhausted at Neston Cross and looking like a trollop. Her clogs were caked in mud, her petticoat bespattered; Dame Kidd's old brown shawl failed to hide her condition; it failed, too, as a covering for her tangled vivid hair.

Concealing weariness and trepidation under a bold air, she approached the vicarage, a rough-cast square house with a porch flanked by large windows, one shuttered, the other with uncurtained panes which revealed Prebendary Abel Ward's library and his white wig airing on a stand. As Emily's clogs clattered up the brick path, a shaven pate cautiously rose above the leather upholstery of a winged chair until a pair of shrewd, wrinkled eyes stared over the top. Emily met the scrutiny with a glance equally challenging. She'd show she wasn't one to be intimidated by a crusty old man, even though he was a vicar. . . .

She knocked assertively, whereupon the Prebendary reached for his wig and pulled the bell-rope. His summons being answered first, Emily watched an elderly servant receive instructions.

The woman opened the front door suddenly. "Be off," she said, "we want no strumpets here."

"I'll thank you not to call me names, seeing I'm a respectable girl only wishing to find myself in the register."

"Not the first that 'ud like to see herself made an honest woman."

The door was closing; Emily's clog intervened. "Good God! I haven't struggled seven miles to turn back ignorant as I came. Give me the church key and I'll find the register myself."

"'Tisn't here; t'Curate keeps it." Triumphantly the door was slammed.

Inquiry located the Reverend Richard Carter in one of the thatched houses at the cross, and he professed himself willing to search the records when he finished his dinner, which Emily interrupted. Deciding to wait in the churchyard, she sank down thankfully on a grave and unwrapped a meal of bread and pork. As she ate, an epitaph on a newly erected tombstone caught her eye:

Harriet Kelly, aged eighteen.

*Pause, pretty maids
Who pass this plot,
Be warned by me,
Who've come to rot.*

*A lovely face
Was my undoing:
It brought me naught
But speedy ruin.*

These lines, being applicable to herself, made Emily extremely low, and she was in tears when the curate pushed open the creaking gate.

Outwardly Neston Parish Church betrayed little evidence of the vicissitudes and improvements it had suffered. A hearse-house built against the south wall of the Norman tower detracted a little from its beauty; apart from this useful addition, the church was a charming example of mediæval architecture. Inside was otherwise; Norman pillars had been sacrificed to make room for modern galleries; a three-decker pulpit half-way down the nave remained as a memento of the Puritan régime.

Following her conductor, a small round man in seedy black, Emily reached the vestry. From a coffer Mr. Carter extracted a pile of dusty parchments. "We only began the Register Book in 1770," he explained, "until then christenings, marriages and burials were recorded together, the nature of the ceremony being denoted by the letters C., M. or B."

This method of compilation rendered the search peculiarly tedious, especially as Mr. Carter suffered from myopia and had to hold each entry close to his eyes. Emily's patience being exhausted, she snatched a parchment and tried to decipher the crabbed writing.

"You can't read!" the curate bantered.

She gave him an indignant look. "Indeed I can!"

Some minutes later she found the marriage of her parents and read aloud: "'Henry Lyon and Mary Kidd, June 11th 1764, by banns, by G. Gardener, Curate. X the mark of Henry Lyon. X the mark of Mary Kidd.'"

"Then we'll skip nine months and look again."

"All along I said 1765—soon after the 26 of April."

"So ye did!"

Again Emily found the record: "'Emy, dr. of Henry Lyon, Smith of Ness, by Mary his wife. May 12th 1765.'"

"D'you want a copy?"

"Foolish I'd be to walk from Wales just to look at it!"

He found an ink-horn, a pen, a sheet of paper, and commenced laboriously to write, his nose close to the quill nib. "Tut!" he

ejaculated, "I've omitted 'Smith' and only written 'Henry Lyon of Ness,' but it don't signify."

"Indeed, I wish the register copied identical."

He answered huffily: "This way is perfectly correct!"

"'Tis not! You've put: 'Amy daughter of Henry Lyon.' My name's 'Emy', not 'Amy'."

"There's no such name as 'Emy'. I have amended the spelling, and shall not write another copy. 'Tis a concession to give a certificate; had I known what a bold, ungrateful girl ye are, I shouldn't have obliged."

Vastly disappointed, Emily left him and quitted the church. She felt so exhausted that she questioned her ability to walk home, even by the shorter route.

Coming to the river by way of the old quay, she clambered down to the sands. They were firm and golden, rippled by the receding tide and punctured with cockle-holes. At low tide the estuary presented an animated spectacle, because the sands served as a coach road between Chester and Parkgate. Gentry hoping to sail on the morrow in the Dublin packet-boat bowled along in their carriages, farmers took the opportunity to transport produce and livestock, old women collected dulse to stew into physic. Striding mannishly, heedless of everything but their own purposes, moved the cockle-gatherers, miserable, savage-looking women with bare feet and legs, their short skirts pinned up into trousers, their bodies clothed in rough, homespun jackets. They carried pieces of bent iron for scraping in the sand, and baskets on each arm similar to the straw bonnets tied upon their heads.

Emily reeled, pains shot through her, so sharp and severe that she had to bend double in order to endure them. She wondered dully if her baby was going to be born, and if anyone would help; there were many who looked curiously, but none stopped or spoke. By marking some object with her eye and keeping her thoughts upon it, she managed to go forward in short stages, but even following this expedient it took an eternity to draw level with the old hostel at Denhall. Arrived there, she abandoned the struggle and sank on the sand. Prepared to die, she was yet alert to her surroundings and was aware that several people paused to stare. So accustomed had she become to hearing them walk on, that she was unprepared to be lifted and carried. She opened her eyes to gaze into a cheerful, bearded face.

"Ain't ye young Emy as used to work at Thomas's?"

"Long ago."

"Not so long, neither. You're in the family way, seemingly?"

Blushing, she glanced aside.

"Wedded?"

"Yes," she lied.

"That's bad, because I had a notion for ye. Queer husband to let ye traipse forlorn until ye drops." Emily was gently deposited in a cart banked high with seaweed; covered with a horse-cloth, it made a luxurious couch. "I'll take ye home," said the Samaritan. Too weary to answer, Emily gratefully smiled.

Rolling comfortably over the sands, she looked towards the green coast of Flintshire, veined with a white tracery of paths and sheep-tracks, and backwards across Gayton Sands to the grey stone houses of Parkgate perched on the top of a high sea wall. Splashing through pools and streams, sometimes sinking into the quicksands, the old horse ambled peacefully, lulling Emily to sleep.

She was much recovered by the following day, but unequal to taking the long walk to the post office. Happily the problem was solved by Mrs. Boydell of the Manor, who offered Dame Kidd a seat in her coach to Chester.

"Madam enjoys the Cathedral service, and when she drives to the city of a fine Sunday she often takes me so I may spend a couple of hours with your Aunt Catherine. Since John Moore came into his uncle's shop in Eastgate, he's grown too haughty to allow his wife to visit her old mother."

Emily had no time to add to her letter, all she could do was to scribble inside the cover:

"My age was got out of the Reggister, and I now sent it to my dear Charles. Once more adue, once more adue, O you dear freind."

With many injunctions she relinquished to her grandmother the packet franked and addressed by Greville to himself. The old woman chuckled: "*Duwch*, gal, think you I've forgotten what 'tis to be in love?"

Calmly Emily settled down to await an answer. No longer was she beset by doubts and fears. Greville, her dearest Greville, was too good and noble to leave even a dog to despair.

Her confidence was rewarded. Contrary to his native prudence, Charles Greville replied immediately, only taking the precaution to use Mr. Watt's newly invented ink, which allowed him to take a

pressed copy. This process necessitated damping the paper, but Emily, too unsophisticated to ascribe a cause for the slightly blurred writing, saw only the "goodness" that directed Greville's pen:

"January 10th 1782

My dear Emily,—I do not make apologies for Sr. H's behaviour to you, & altho' I advised you deserve his esteem by your good conduct, I own I never expected better from him. It was your duty to deserve good treatment, & it gave me great concern to see you imprudent the first time you came to G. from the country, and as the same conduct was repeated when you was last in town I began to despair of your happiness. To prove to you that I do not accuse you falsely I only mention 5 guineas & half a guinea for coach. But, my dear Emily, as you seem quite miserable now, I do not mean to give you uneasiness, but comfort, and tell you that I will forget your faults & bad conduct to Sr. H. & to myself, & will not repent my good humour if I shall find that you have learnt by experience to value yourself, & endeavour to preserve your friends by your good conduct and affection.

I will now answer your last letter. You tell me you think your friends look coolly on you, it is therefore time to leave them; but it is necessary for you to decide some points *before* you come to town.

You are sensible that for the three next months your situation will not admit of a giddy life, if you wished it; it would therefore be imprudent to come & hunt after new connexion, or try to regain the one you give up as lost. After you have told me that Sr. H. gave you barely money to get to your friends, & has never answered one letter since, & neither provides for you nor takes any notice of you, it might appear laughing at you to advise you to make Sr. H. more kind and attentive. I do not think a great deal of time should be lost, as I have never seen a woman clever enough to keep a man who was tired of her. But it is a great deal more for me to *advise you* never to see him again, & to write only to inform him of your determination. You must, however, do either the one or the other.

You may easily see, my dearest Emily, why it is absolutely necessary for this point to be completely settled *before I can* move one step. If you love Sr. H. you should not give him up, & if you continue with him it would be ridiculous in me to take care of his girl, who is better able to maintain her. But besides this, my Emily, I would not be troubled with your connexions (excepting your mother) & with Sr. H. friends, for the universe.

My advise then is to take a steady resolution; try whatever you please, & if Sr. H. will continue your friend, or if you prefer any other friend, do not be your own enemy; & at last, if everything fails, if you mean to have my protection I must *first* know from you that *you are clear of every connexion, that you will never take them again without my consent.* I shall then be free to dry up the tears of my lovely Emily & to give her comfort. If you do not forfeit my esteem perhaps my Emily may be happy. You know I have been so by avoiding the vexation which so frequently arises from ingratitude and caprice. Nothing but your letter & your distress could incline me to alter my system; but remember I never will give up my peace, nor continue my connexion one moment after my confidence is betray'd.

If you should come to town free from all engagements, & take my advice, you will live very retired *till* you are brought to bed. You should part with your maid & take another *name*. By degrees I could get you a new set of acquaintances, & by keeping your own secret & no one about you having it in their power to betray you, I may expect to see you respected & admired. Thus far relates to yourself. As to the child, Sr. H. may be informed of circumstances which may reasonably make him doubt, & it is not worth while to make it a subject of altercation. Its mother shall obtain it kindness from me, & it shall never want.

I inclose you some money; do not throw it away. You may send some presents when you arrive in town, but do not be on the road without some money to *spare*, in case you should be fatigued, & wish to take your time. I will send Sophy any thing she wishes for; give her a good many kisses, & a thousand to my dear Emily. God bless you, my dearest, lovely girl; take your determination soon, & let me hear from you once more. Adieu, my dear Emily."

The enclosure was fifteen pounds, a munificent sum that modified Dame Kidd's hostility. "More of a nobleman than I thought. Now Mr. Greville wants you, I suppose you'll be leaving your Granny?"

Emily was too excited to heed the wistful voice or to notice the old eyes, schooled by long practice to patience and resignation. "I'll be away to London the minute after I warn Greville to expect me. A letter posted to-morrow should reach him by the end of the month, and I'll tell him I set out as near as I can to the first Monday in February."

It was decided that Emily should travel from Chester by a coach

which left the 'Pied Bull' on Tuesdays, a local enterprise offering cheaper fares but slower transit, and on that account a more suitable conveyance than the "regular," lurching at high speed.

In defiance of Greville's injunctions, Emily made her grandmother a present of two panniers of coal delivered by donkey from the collieries at Ewloe; she also restored the old woman's savings, adding five shillings interest; for the first time she began to think joyfully of her baby. Perhaps all was for the best, and the little thing might prove a deal of comfort.

She devoted her last days at Hawarden to paying farewell visits, noting with satisfaction the discomfited expressions of relatives and friends who had disbelieved in Mr. Hart. Only Sophy Nichol maintained a hostile attitude, and stared with strange obsessed eyes from her bed in the corner of her Aunt Reynolds's kitchen. Emily had avoided Sophy for many weeks, and was unprepared for the change in her appearance. Gone was the childish comeliness that had captivated Greville; gone too were the roguish glances and dimpled smiles. The face upon the pillow might have belonged to a woman of thirty who had measured the depths of pain.

The girl's inimical glance penetrated Emily's newly restored confidence and reduced her to stammering confusion. "I-I'm c-come to bid you farewell and to g-give a message from Gr-Greville."

"I don't believe you."

"Then I've a mind not to read what he says, though I brought his letter o' purpose." Unfolding the four closely covered pages, she held them so that her cousin could see and recognize the writing.

A flush suffused Sophy's wasted face; receding, it left her ghastly pale. She spoke slowly with sulky suspicion. "How do I know you're not tricking me with some old letters?"

"But see? 'Tis dated January 10th, 1782, only three weeks ago."

Sophy's claw-like hands distractedly beat upon the quilt. "I can't read! I can't read!" she wailed. "Why torment me bringing a letter from my beloved Greville when I can't read?"

"Only two lines concern you," Emily tartly rejoined, "and I'll read them so you may know where you stand beside me. He says: 'I will send Sophy anything she wishes for; give her a good many kisses, and a thousand to my dear Emily.'" Folding the letter, she complacently fitted it within the cover. "'Tisn't everyone as would reveal the message after the mean way you've behaved, but I'm not one to bear malice."

In attempting a retort, Sophy caught her breath and started to cough; when the paroxysm was over she was spent and could only speak in gasps. "Tell my dear Greville to buy me a maiden garland and to send it at the waning moon. I want my name wrote on a white ribbon and a glove or something he has worn put in among the flowers."

Emily rose abruptly. "Nonsense! He shall send a hat or gownd to wear in springtime."

Sophy gave her a cryptic look and turned her face to the wall. "As you please," she said indifferently.

Leaving Hawarden on the following day, Emily stayed the night with her Aunt Catherine at Chester in order to be at the coach office at five o'clock in the morning. The happiness of joining Greville was dimmed by a tearful parting from her grandmother and by the recollection of Sophy's stricken aspect. Purposefully she tried to dwell upon bright prospects ahead, but only when the spires of London were in sight did the memories drop into the background.



CHAPTER TWENTY

NOT even Lady Jersey or beautiful Lady Peter Payne attracted more admiring eyes than Emma Hart, escorted by Charles and Robert Greville in the park early on the King's birthday. Carefully pulling off a modish riding-habit of striped blue-and-white Manchester, she reflected that even if she never wore it again, it had proved well worth a quarter's allowance.

When the ride was first mooted, Charles demurred on grounds of expense, an objection swept aside by Colonel Greville, who volunteered "to supply the cavalry." Emma rode Fairy, a cropped bay mare, Charles had the loan of Perreau, a horse named after the forger whose property it had been; the Equerry was mounted on Orderly, a spirited, powerful roan purchased from the Prince of Wales. It was Emma's first public appearance since the unfortunate occasion when Greville took her to Ranelagh. Eager to show she could eclipse the professional vocalist, she had sung an *Aria di bravura* to an enthusiastic assembly, and, instead of approbation, earned Greville's profound displeasure. Many months elapsed before Emma lived down the disgraceful episode; even now it cropped up when a lecture was necessary. Happily causes for reprimand were less frequent; after enjoying fourteen months of Greville's precepts and good example, she felt confident of improvement. She flattered herself that her deportment during the recent ride had attained the high standard set by Mrs. Wells. . . .

After laying her habit in paper on the wardrobe shelf, Emma donned a grey cashmere gown and tied a blue ribbon round her waist. Leaning from the window, she gathered two pink roses and tucked them into her folded bodice, thereby planting a thorn in her thumb. While she sucked it and probed with a pin, she looked out over the green to Paddington Church, a small, neat building surmounted at the west end by a bell-turret and spire, from which a

flag fluttered in honour of His Majesty's official birthday. A low wall divided the churchyard from a gravel drive that served genteel brick residences encircling the common. Paddington Green was but a mile from Tyburn Turnpike, yet it was rural as any hamlet. From her window Emma could see a rookery in tall elms surrounding Manor Farm, and away beyond the farrier's tiled roof the hills of Bayswater crowned by a mill with slowly turning sails. The only link between Paddington and London was Mr. Miles's pair-horse coach, which took three hours on the journey to Holborn Bars. In so secluded a spot there was neither society nor temptation to extravagance; rents were at country rates, and Greville acquired a roomy house in Edgware Row for the price of a stable in Westminster.

Under the window Charles and his brother strolled up and down talking politics, a topic that commended itself to Emma only because it gave her the prolonged pleasure of hearing her lover's voice: "As my appointment depends in some measure upon the present Ministry, I have every motive for wishing the administration to continue, but I fear its unpopularity with the followers of both parties renders the prospect uncertain. Fox was consistent in refusing to serve under Shelburne, but forming a coalition with North, whom he has denounced for years, has the appearance of an unscrupulous conspiracy to obtain office on any terms. In my opinion Fox and North have committed a fatal error: both should have known that coalitions between parties long hostile can succeed only when the wish for coalition pervades the lower ranks of both."

"Meanwhile," added Colonel Greville, "the King impatiently awaits the moment when he can rid himself of an intolerable yoke."

Down in the hall Molly Dring announced breakfast by ringing a hand-bell. Quitting her bedroom, Emma ran along the passage and down four steps to the landing that crossed a tall window overlooking the yard. There she paused to watch Robert Fulke Greville's fine riding-horses being watered by Sergeant White, a smart figure in the handsome uniform of the 10th Dragoons. Emma was not the only spectator. In the kitchen Nelly Gray, carrying a chocolate-pot in one hand and a plate of hot rolls in the other, stood spellbound by the dashing soldier. Emma, sympathetically surveying the scene, shared Nelly's dismay when Mrs. Cadogan appeared from the background.

Early in the spring, Emma's mother had joined the household, after a disagreement with Lady Warwick over Lord Brooke. To avoid

being associated with the affair, Greville insisted that Mary Duggan's name should be changed if she came to Paddington Green. He had been no loser by his generosity: Emma's spirits had improved, expenses had gone down, and the cooking was not excelled by the Thatched House chef.

Emma reached the hall as the brothers entered from the garden. Both were in deep mourning for their sister, Lady Anne Greville, whose funeral they had attended two days before.

Colonel Greville hastened to hold open the dining-room door, genially remarking: "Well, Emma, are you recovered from the fatigues of our early morning alert?"

"Indeed I feel all the better for it, though to-morrow I may be too stiff to hobble downstairs. The last time I went riding was with Sir Harry nearly two years ago."

Charles, taking his place at the head of the table, frowned and pointedly addressed his brother on a different subject. "I expected we should hear ere this from Hamilton. In his letter of April the twenty-ninth he spoke of writing from Calabria, but in the disordered state of the country an opportunity was probably lacking. I would have given much to share his expedition. 'Tis reported that in localities which suffered most by the earthquakes, animals showed evident sensibility of approaching shocks."

"Does Uncle William send an account of his observations to the Royal Society?"

"Sir Joseph Banks has written a request to that effect, but 'tis more likely Hamilton will himself deliver an address. He should reach London next month; Fox has dispatched the necessary papers sanctioning his leave."

The dining-room was panelled and painted white to show off a *Mater Dolorosa* by Calabresi over the chimney-piece and Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of Miss Emily Coventry as *Thais*, which Emma faced from her seat at the foot of the table. The celebrated courtesan was represented as a rushing figure bearing a blazing torch in one hand and with the other inciting unseen spectators to the destruction of Persepolis, flaming in the background. Drapery and every detail of the scene depicted devastation, and by its vigorous treatment might be claimed in Greville's complacent words as: "One of Sir Joshua's permanent pictures." From the first its effect on Emma had been provocative, and one awful day she threw a knife at the lovely face. Happily it flew wide and struck the woodwork. As usual, she suffered

for her unbridled passion. Greville's calm manner and noble magnanimity mastered her more surely than any reproaches; crushed and contrite, she threw herself weeping at his feet. Though only one of many early rebellions, it differed from others in being recorded by a deep incision in the panelling, and as the cause which changed her name from Emily to Emma.

Colonel Greville accepted a cup of chocolate from his hostess, at the same time remarking to his brother: "T'other day I met James Wyatt in Piccadilly; he told me he hoped soon to be erecting a house on that vacant plot next to Colonel Minshull; Portman Square must be returning to favour, which will brighten your prospects of selling."

"I should be contented with a suitable tenant. Portman Square reflected last year's political crisis more than any fashionable locality; 'tis to be hoped recovery under stable government will be equally marked. Though I reduced all luxuries, I cannot pretend the loss on No. 12 has left me unembarrassed."

"Yet he never cuts me down in anything, and lets me keep the most expensive servants in the whole of Paddington. Would you believe it?" Emma eagerly demanded. "Molly Dring gets two pound three shillings and elevenpence every month, and Nelly Gray no less than one pound nineteen and tenpence. When I came to service in London I thought 'twas riches to earn five pound eight shillings a year."

Robert Greville looked at her with a kindly smile. "Poor Emma! 'twas cruel to pay so little."

"My dear!" said Charles thoughtfully as he poured chocolate into his saucer to cool. "In our family circle such frankness may be permitted, but I have heard you make similar confidences to Heneage Legge and Henry Willoughby. Invariably I have found it a mistake to make admissions that later can be turned by an enemy to one's disadvantage. 'Tis very certain no one will think the better of you if they know you have performed menial tasks."

"But," cried Emma, "I'm proud to be able to scrub, black-lead, clean vegetables, and prepare a sheep's head, which is a difficult thing, not to be done neat by everyone."

"When those were your tasks, you were right to feel pleasure in doing them well, but now your way of life has changed. In giving you instructors in music and singing and a mistress for general education, I expect you to take pride in genteel accomplishments that belong to an improved status."

Tears came into Emma's eyes and hung upon her long lashes. "Indeed, indeed I didn't mean to shame you by telling of my poor upbringing. I only boast that I can do common tasks because, as yet, my accomplishments are indifferent."

"You are less than just to yourself, my dear." Charles turned to his brother. "In reality Emma makes excellent progress both in music and singing, though we cannot claim equal success in writing. Emma allows her thoughts to race her pen, which chases after in an untidy scrawl."

"'Tis true," she sadly admitted, "and my mother, who did not know her letters three months ago, now writes far prettier than me, who've known the way these five years."

"Mrs. Cadogan does not disdain the pot-hooks Miss Fitch sets her to copy."

The brothers had not time for a lengthy breakfast, as they were due at St. James's Palace before noon. Their recent bereavement, which denied them the pleasures of the Court Ball at night, did not excuse their attendance in the great Council Chamber to hear the Poet Laureate's Birthday Ode, set to music by Mr. Stanley, and performed by the King's band of musicians.

Before setting forth, Robert went to the stables to inspect his horses, whereupon Emma left her seat to perch on the arm of Greville's chair.

"It has been such a charming morning, I can't bear to think 'tis over," she lamented. "And from what you say it may be a great while before your duties allow you to come back to me."

"Until I have everything in order I expect to find myself constantly posting 'twixt London and Windsor. But rest assured, dearest girl, the tranquillity of Edgware Row is more to my mind than the splendours of Court."

Charles Greville's recent appointment as Treasurer of his Majesty's Household necessitated his attendance upon the Royal Family on the removal of the Court in two days' time to Windsor. As their Majesties would remain out of town until August, when the Queen would be brought to bed of her fifteenth child, Emma dolefully anticipated long periods of separation from her dearest Charles. The only bright gleam in a grey horizon was the expected arrival of Sir William Hamilton, whose reputation as an antiquary, connoisseur, observer of volcanic phenomena, and his Majesty's Envoy to the King of the Two Sicilies, gave him the brilliance of a constellation.

"Indeed if affords me some comfort that you will miss me, though you cannot be as miserable as I shall be, for when you're away you are never from my thoughts."

Gratified by proper sentiments, Greville turned his handsome head and kissed her in the lingering, tender manner that made her faint with rapture. "Oh, my love, if you should ever cast me off, I believe I should die," she whispered.

"Fie, Emma!" he responded banteringly. "Ye speak as if I were the only one likely to change. When the moment of separation arrives it may well be your wish to end our connexion."

"Never! Never!"

She left the house with her arm through his, and, crossing the little garden to the wicket gate, stepped out upon the road whereon Colonel Greville waited. Charles was to ride Fairy, leaving Perreau for Sergeant White, who was the heavier man. Emma held the stirrup as her lover mounted, and when he bent down to say good-bye she could scarcely restrain her tears. "Pray, dearest Greville, come to see me whenever you are able, and should you be detained at Windsor, write to me, and think on me with kindness!"

"Ye shall hear," he gravely promised.

"And you'll tell me the moment Sir Will'um arrives?"

"If I have the opportunity!"

The sky that had been bright and cloudless in the early morning had become overcast and threatening; a cool wind turned back the leaves of the poplar trees and drove Emma's dress against her tall, graceful body. She shivered, but would not go indoors until the horsemen disappeared behind the clump of elms that hid the bend of the road; great was her disappointment when Charles failed to look back.

Completely dispirited, she returned to the house and sought her mother, whom she found in the kitchen larding an old fowl preparatory to boiling it.

"This is the white Dorking you brought from Enfield. She wouldn't lay much more, so I thought she'd do us most good in the pot." Mrs. Cadogan dexterously liberated a slip of bacon into a pinched-up portion of flesh.

"But, Mam! She was my friend, and I wouldn't have grudged the cost of her keep, however long she'd lived."

"Then there's foolish you are, Emma, and heading for ruin with your 'sensibility'."

"Greville likes sensibility."

"Gentlemen deceive themselves, my dear, and that's the reason females have to act double-faced. Think of the scoldings you got for extravagance before I came, and I'll be bound Mr. Greville never said you had sensibility when the word fitted."

"'Tis only in the last few weeks he's paid me that compliment."

"That *shows*! Now remember, Emma, no gal can afford to be so foolish as a gentleman chooses to think her."

"I wouldn't deceive Greville in anything!"

"'Twould take all your doing!" Mrs. Cadogan dryly retorted, giving the fowl a final jab. "There! That'll make a tasty dinner for Miss Fitch, provided Molly doesn't overboil it when my back's turned."

A cordial friendship had sprung up between Mrs. Cadogan and Emma's preceptress, the more surprising as they appeared to have little in common. Miss Fitch was a prim, sharp-featured spinster of fifty, prone to quinsys and spasms; accomplished in French, writing, fine work, plain work, and the use of the globes. Inability to include drawing and music in her curriculum rendered her cheaper than a governess who could conduct a pupil through the whole gamut of education. The economy thus achieved Greville put towards the fees of a singing-master, who also taught on the harpsichord.

Hoping to conquer low spirits by applying herself to scales and five-finger exercises, Emma betook herself to the library, where the instrument stood between the window and Greville's cabinet of crystals. The room was a repository for such articles of *virtù* as could be removed from Portman Square without detriment to the town house; the most conspicuous, a statue of Psyche sent by Gavin Hamilton from Rome, stood in a specially constructed niche.

Emma had not long been at her employment when she was joined by Mrs. Cadogan, also intent on self-improvement. Establishing herself at Greville's desk, she spread out a sheet of ruled paper headed in Miss Fitch's elegant Italian hand: *THE CAT ATE THE RAT, THE DOG BIT THE PIG*, statements which she proceeded to copy with nicely graduated strokes of the pen. Soon Emma interrupted her exercises to admire her mother's masterly calligraphy.

"You do it very neat," she observed, "the up strokes so very fine and the down as black as can be. Pretty writing is a thing I cannot master, though Greville for ever scolds about my untidy scrawl."

"You learnt badly at the beginning. 'Tis better to know naught than to be learnt wrong."

A rap on the knocker sent Emma racing to the window. By pressing her cheek to the glass, she obtained an oblique view of the step and a postman whistling a tune and jingling the money in his wallet. Emma was at the front door before Molly Dring left the kitchen. The letter was stamped with the Chester mark and a charge of ninepence; she paid the fee and ran excitedly to Mrs. Cadogan.

"'Tis a letter from Aunt Ann Reynolds," she cried, breaking the seals. "'Twill be to say the things got safe to my poor Emma." Her eyes travelled down the page, then she went back to the first line and read aloud:

"Hawarden, Satterday, May 28th 1783

Dear Mary and Emy,

The dress and bonit for the Child fit to a marvil. On her birthday she cut a tooth and as nine now and is a prety child with eyes lik Emys. Yestaday we took her to play on Sofies grave wich is a mass of primroses and vilets your Gamma ses the mony for Emma will last til the end of sumer as Milk is cheep and that is all she as with some bread. Young Thomas Kidd was caught by the Press last week and took to Liverpool, and that is all we now. His Father and Mother is upset. Sara had another daughter last month to be kristened Cecilia, and Michel Connor was put away again on munday. We send our duty to Mr. Hart and kind love to you both from yr affectionite sister and aunt *Ann Reynolds*.

P.S. Your Gamma is well but for reumatiks, and I have nothing to complain of."

Emma cried as she re-folded the letter. "I don't suppose I'd know my baby now she's grown a great girl with nine teeth. She was only a day old when Greville took her from me; I thought it cruel, though he says 'twas kindest to send her to Granny before I had time to grow fond."

"He was wise, my lamb. Had you nursed your baby, 'twould have broken your heart to give her up."

"'Twas nearly broke as it was; when I grew strong enough I used to walk on the river-bank and think of drowning myself. 'Twas a cold spring, with never a gleam of sun, and the water flowed deep and green over long, shuddering weeds. For the New River is not a happy brook that leaps and plays among boulders, but an artificial, sluggish stream made to carry water to London."

"I never understood why Mr. Greville took you to Enfield Town, unless 'twas to avoid his friends. Only rich merchants and such-like live north of town."

"Greville chose it so we might keep our affairs private, and because the landlady of the 'Greyhound' proved tender when Sophy was ill."

News of her baby left Emma too disturbed again to settle at the harpsichord; vaguely wandering from room to room, she decided to walk over the meadows to meet Miss Fitch coming from Westbourne Green. Ignoring a threat of rain, she put on her tippet, and, accompanied by Greville's pug dog, took the short cut through the churchyard. She had not proceeded far when her name was called; turning, she saw the Honourable Henry Willoughby vaulting tombstones to accelerate pursuit.

"My goodness, Emma, you do lead a fellow a race! I saw you cross the road, and thought I could easily overtake you, but you go like a lamp-lighter. Suppose Charles is capering at Court?"

"He's attending to his duties!"

"Now don't you put on haughty airs with me, Miss Puss, for they don't become you, I declare they don't. But it don't signify, because you'll be all smiles when I tell you what I've come about."

"Indeed I'll be surprised if you can change my thoughts."

"Now look 'ee, Emma, I'm turned twenty-two, a man of substance, mark you! As such I've come this day with a formal offer to set you up handsomely with servants, an equipage, and a house in a *tonish* part of town, the only stipulation being that your favours are exclusively mine."

Emma stopped and looked at him. Lord Middleton's heir had a round, dimpled face, a snub nose, pink and white cheeks, straw-coloured brows and lashes, and elaborately dressed yellow hair which he wore unpowdered. He was of sturdy build, but lacked height, and had to look up at Emma.

"What will you do about Greville?" she demanded ironically.

"As soon as our plans are fixed, I'll put the matter to him. Such transactions often take place; 'twill be a gentleman's agreement."

"I get a fine house, a carriage, servants, and your company; what does Greville receive in exchange?"

"My good offices with my parents, Emma. I'm an astute fellow, and it's clear to me my younger sister has struck his eye. Henrietta will be seventeen at the end of July—as pretty a wench as you'll meet between here and Charing Cross, and likely as any to draw a rich

prize. Now, the Right Honourable Charles Francis Greville is but a younger brother, and no *parti* in the eyes of a match-making mamma. My plan is to further his suit in exchange for his mistress, and as the transfer will leave him free for his wooing, 'twill do a good turn all round! "

"But supposing I don't wish to change? "

"No connexion can last for ever, and you've been with Greville more than a twelve-month. When you think it over, you'll agree the advantages are all on my side. With me you'll cut a dash in town instead of mouldering in the country, we're near of an age, and as 'twill be my first serious affair, I shall come fresher to it than a man jaded by many amours."

"If I hadn't promised Greville to behave, I'd box your ears."

Henry Willoughby grinned like a school-boy. "You think Greville's a saint. When you find he's no different from other men of fashion you'll be glad of my offer, which holds good till I formally withdraw it."

"You can do that now! "

"I know the value of patience where females are concerned! "

It was impossible to take the young man seriously, and Emma's indignation dissolved in laughter. "I don't know why I can't feel as vexed as I should," she lamented.

In retrospect the incident appeared less amusing. It showed Emma that she had made no advance towards respectability, despite good conduct and devoted efforts to improve. Greville's prolonged absence gave her ample time to take stock of her position; his own words at parting, coupled with Henry Willoughby's estimate of love's brief duration, had rudely shaken complacency. Anxiety robbed her of sleep and appetite, she lost heart in education, and ceased striving to emulate Mrs. Wells.

"For what's the use of trying, if I'm to be cast off in the end? Greville is always telling me that if I model myself on Mrs. Wells I shall be respected by everyone, yet her cleverness didn't prevent Admiral Keppell growing tired, though she lived with him domestic as possible in some outlandish place in Wales."

Emma's confidant was Mr. Romney, upon whose sympathy she could rely.

"Don't spoil yourself by copying anyone; all are your inferiors."

"But you don't understand! If Greville tells me to cultivate myself to a pattern he admires, it must be with an object. Now doesn't

it seem reasonable that he plans to make me his wife when I improve in character and talents?" She looked anxiously at the artist. Mr. Romney was engaged on a picture of Emma as a gypsy, and he continued to paint without making a reply. "Well, answer! Don't you think that's what he means to do?"

"Emma! Emma! How can I guess Mr. Greville's motives? 'Tis not possible for me to estimate the character of a man whose birth and way of life is far removed from mine."

"But you know him, and how good and honourable he is."

The artist drew his breath sharply, as if caught by sudden pain. "Honour! What is honour? In each class it means something different. A gentleman believes it a point of honour to pay his gambling debts, yet thinks nothing of owing his tradesmen; a tradesman counts it a disgrace to owe a bill, but cheerfully cheats at whist. Where is your rigid rule? What is your standard for behaviour?"

"But I would never lead Greville to depend on me, and then betray him!"

"Because you love him; not because you are honourable. Would you be so scrupulous in your dealings with other men?"

His words recalled incidents that Emma wished to forget. Blushing, she hung her head. "I'd try to act true!"

"My dear, we all try; but how few of us succeed!"

Emma sat once a week to Mr. Romney, and when the weather was fair she walked to and from Cavendish Square, thus saving two shillings on coach hire. For the most part it was a pleasant, leafy walk, rendered more agreeable by the Government's decision to change the place of execution from Tyburn to Newgate. It was Mrs. Cadogan's custom to meet her daughter on the homeward journey, and as they walked back they ate custard tarts which Emma bought from the stall by Hanover Gates. Sometimes Mrs. Cadogan was accompanied by Jane Farmer, spending her day out in the country. On Greville's advice, Mr. Romney and Jane were the only associates of her former life that Emma retained, it being to her interests to keep "totally clear from all the society and habits of kept women, only retaining two or three creditable acquaintances".

Attendance at the House of Commons and the administrative duties of his office detained Greville in London and Windsor until the middle of July. He returned to Paddington after Parliament rose, suffering from one of his periodic gastric attacks, the result of over-zealous application and the putrid air of committee rooms.

Emma welcomed her stricken lover with the tenderness of a wife and the gaiety of a mistress who finds herself indispensable.

For two days Greville lay supine, with closed eyes and a complexion that looked pea-green in contrast with the pillow. A letter from Sir William Hamilton, posted in Paris and brought by special rider from London, did more to restore the invalid than Mrs. Cadogan's carefully concocted mutton custard and Emma's fond ministrations.

The British Envoy to Naples interrupted his journey to deliver messages and gifts from Queen Carolina to her sister Marie Antoinette, and would proceed to England the moment he could extricate himself from the kindness and hospitality showered upon him by Louis XVI, the Queen, and "a crowd of cosmopolitan friends who find themselves captives in this gay, enchanting city. I am much struck," he added, "by the freedom of conversation on general liberty, even within the walls of the palace. Young men of rank who were sent to America to assist in the revolution there, have returned with enthusiastic notions of general freedom, very different from those formerly prevailing." Sir William ended with a request that a good lodging might be engaged for him in town from the second week of August—"if ye cannot accommodate me in Portman Square."

Emma was delighted at the improvement immediately manifested in Greville's health. Her own spirits rose sympathetically at the near prospect of seeing "Sir Will'um", who, a legendary hero, dominated every transaction in Greville's menage.

Sitting up in bed, accepting sops of toast fished from a steaming bowl by Emma's scalded fingers, Greville mused aloud on events likely to transpire from his uncle's stay in England.

"Now he has a free hand with the Pembroke estate, doubtless he will take advantage of the opportunities presented. By good management Hubberson could be made a port of consequence; if the assistance of Government could be secured, the estate might be developed on lines very advantageous to my uncle and his heirs."

"As it is, I suppose the land brings him a mint of money?"

"Not so much as it should. Lady Hamilton was sentimental at the expense of her pocket, and allowed bad tenants to remain because they held leases in her father's life-time."

"Was she handsome, that Sir Will'um married her?"

"My dear girl, *no!*"

"But you say he has a weakness for pretty women, so how did he come to wed a plain one?"

"According to my mother, he was passionately enamoured of Lady Diana Spencer, elder daughter of the late Duke of Marlborough, but due to his lack of fortune she married Viscount Bolingbroke. The following year my uncle was accepted by the daughter of Hugh Barlow of Laurenny Hall; she brought him the Welsh estate and a devotion that was most creditable to her."

"What happened to Lady Bolingbroke?"

"The marriage lasted something over ten years before she was divorced by Act of Parliament; two days afterwards she married Topham Beauclerk. Bolingbroke wasn't the man to like an artist for a wife, whereas Topham was delighted. They got on admirably, he with his library and she with her paints and brushes, till Beauclerk's death three years ago."

Emma cried excitedly: "Then Sir Will'm will be able to marry her, and mend his broken heart!"

Greville's face wore a darkening expression; petulantly he pushed away the broth. "I don't wish for any more!"

Emma set aside the bowl and sat quietly awaiting his pleasure, happy in the felicity of serving and admiring a good and wonderful man. To eyes less loving Greville might have appeared a jaded and unromantic spectacle. His chin was blue with three days' growth of beard, old pomade and powder formed a dirty coating to the thick plat of hair hanging over his night-shirt, and the whites of his large, melancholy eyes were tinged with bilious yellow.

After an interval he voiced his thoughts: "Lady Di. must be fifty; she's had six children, and I don't think 'twould be her inclination to marry a third time. I have more fears of Anne Damer, who is but little over thirty, and with talents and attractions above the ordinary. After a tragic marriage and seven years of widowhood, she might welcome a match with a man of fashion. If children resulted from such a union, 'twould spell disaster for me as heir apparent."

"Has Sir Will'm named you so?"

Greville answered pettishly: "There's no Bond; but for long it has been understood."

"Maybe she doesn't please him," Emma consoled.

He laughed cheerlessly. "Indeed Hamilton sings Mrs. Damer's praises hardly less loudly than does Mr. Walpole, who says: 'She writes Latin like Pliny, she models like Bernini and has excelled

moderns in the similitudes of her busts.' And I have reason to fear that General Conway would welcome a marriage between his only child and his best friend."

Greville was so worked up by the conversation that he declared himself unable to remain in bed; wearing a drab dressing-gown, and with his legs wrapped in the camel-hair shawls used by Emma for her "Attitudes," he sat drooping in a chair by the window.

"Will you see a doctor?"

Groaning, he rested his aching head on his hand. "It might be wise."

After being blooded twice and undergoing blistering and other discipline, Greville had so far recovered at the end of the week to come downstairs; two more days and he reclined in a sunny corner of the garden while Emma, sitting on a rustic bench with a work-box beside her, felled the seams of his new shirts.

"I must get to town to-morrow," he sighed. "Hamilton may arrive any day, and I should be greatly provoked if everything was not in readiness."

"You'll bring Sir Will'um to see me as soon as he comes?"

Greville smiled indulgently. "First I must avow your existence, sweet Emma, and I shall find it difficult to explain how a double *ménage* spells economy."

"But I save you money, do I not?"

"Since your mother came we manage wonderfully, and if I could but dispose of my house in Portman Square I should be in an improving way."

Still shaky and yellow from his illness, Greville set out for town to the dull boom of the park guns announcing the birth of a Princess. Having disposed of his carriages, he made the journey in a coach hired from the 'Wheatsheaf Tavern' in Church Street, a rickety, musty vehicle, with an old horse-cloth covering rents in the seat, and raised so high on massive wheels that Emma's eyes were level with the bottoms of the windows.

"Good-bye, dearest Greville, and come back soon with Sir Will'um." Leaning against the wicket gate, Emma watched the antiquated coach roll and lurch in and out of ruts, raising clouds of dust that settled in a grey bloom upon the cracked leather body.

Sir William Hamilton reached London in mid-August, but Emma's eager curiosity remained unsatisfied. The handsome and popular Minister received an enthusiastic welcome from scores of aristocratic

relatives and friends; he renewed connexion with scientific and archæological societies; and in his elegant new French coach drove to Windsor to pay his respects to his foster-brother, the King of England. With so many distractions, it was not surprising that he delayed visiting his nephew's mistress. As recompense she enjoyed many brief visits from her dearest Charles, who was not always included in invitations received by his uncle. Though outwardly composed, Emma detected uneasiness beneath her lover's temperate manner. Mindful of his careful training, she curbed her forthright tongue.

"I suppose the Earl of Pembroke, Sir Joseph Banks, and all Sir Will'um's special friends are eager to engage him?"

"The town is competing for his company. This night the Duchess of Cumberland gives a rout in his honour; to-morrow he is engaged to dine at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, and afterwards attends a reception at Miss Monkton's house in Charles Street."

Emma responded innocently: "I thought 'twould be his old cronies he would especially favour."

"On the contrary, he bestows his partiality upon the ladies, to the exclusion of more serious acquaintances; in fact, I felt obliged to remonstrate with my cousin Mary Hamilton for encouraging her young friends to monopolize him."

Greville referred no more to the matter until Sir William's phaeton arrived to take him back to town. Kissing Emma absently, he remarked: "When my uncle comes here, as he promises to do, I wish you to show him special attention. Wear one of the plain muslin gowns of Romney's design and your hair loose save for a fillet; be ready to perform some attitudes if I request them."

"I'll do all you say—but will Sir Will'um come?"

"I *hope* so," Greville replied with unwonted fervour.

Emma's part was so important that he dispatched a groom on horseback to warn her early in the day of the impending visit. Sir William and Greville were to drive out after dinner, and would remain to drink tea, which was to be served at seven of the clock.

Immediately Mrs. Cadogan tore up the carpets and set Molly and Nelly to beat them in the garden; Emma was instructed to take a bath and wash her hair. "Fine ladies think to beautify themselves by aid of Italian Lily Paste and Spanish wool, but there's naught to beat soap and spring water."

It was a warm, still evening, and the horses could be heard long

before the carriage came into view. Emma ran out and started to wave, in the hope she could be seen.

During his stay in Paris Sir William had bought a handsome equipage from M. Pascal, the famous coach-maker of the Rue Guenegaud. The panels were painted with festoons of flowers on an ash-coloured ground, the whole varnished until it glittered. A set of bay horses, placed at Sir William's disposal by the King, drew the coach at a spanking pace. Emma was so enchanted by the lovely spectacle that she forgot to be awed by Greville's august relation, forgot, too, her curtsy, and clasped the Minister warmly by the arm.

"'Tis more beautiful than the state coach," she cried, "which, when you come to think of it, is more like the great bed of Ware than a carriage."

"In fact," said Sir William, laughing at her eager face, "their Majesties' numerous progeny could be packed within, including the infant Princess Amelia."

Emma fingered the sides of the coach, then she climbed on the step and prodded the dove-coloured upholstery. Sir William gazed in astonishment and profound admiration. Under her lover's management Emma's beauty had nearly reached perfection; seen for the first time she startled and delighted the beholder. Perturbed by her conduct, Greville frowned and signalled behind his uncle's back, causing her to leap from the coach and gravely curtsy.

"Indeed you'll think I have no manners," she lamented. "'Tis excitement, not lack of instruction, that makes me act remiss. You could hardly understand how I've lived for this moment, and I hope you'll believe me sincere when I tell you I've thought of little else for weeks."

Sir William took her hand and kissed it. "My dear Emma, no one could look into your eyes and doubt that truth gave them their candid beauty." He offered her his arm up the path, and, lest Greville might feel neglected, drew him to his other side, remarking: "*'Tria juncta in uno'*."

Quite at ease, and delighted to display accomplishments before such a charming and appreciative audience, Emma sang the songs she had assiduously practised for the occasion, and after presiding at the tea-table, prepared to give an exhibition of "Attitudes". The idea originated from the tableaux invented by Dr. Graham; the classical theme was maintained, but the treatment had altered out of recognition. Under the direction of Romney and Greville, Emma's

statuesque representations had become dramatic scenes in which, with the aid of a couple of shawls and an Etruscan urn, she portrayed a gallery of varied characters. In dumb-show she enacted Daphne's flight from Apollo, Niobe mourning her children, and the death of Dido.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Sir William, clapping his hands. Turning to Greville he added: "My God, she's remarkable! I've never seen anything like her in my life. Emma, you'd make a fortune if you showed this extraordinary art of yours at the Pantheon."

Divesting herself of her shawl, Emma quitted the candle-lit recess in which she had posed, to perch on the arm of Greville's chair. Dressed in a sleeveless calico chemise, with her hair rippling down her back, she was distractingly beautiful as she smiled tenderly upon her lover.

Sir William's expression showed that he thought so. "I never expected to see a modern antique, and I never saw a statue so perfect."

"I imagined that would be your opinion, as it is my own," Greville responded complacently. "Show Sir William your profile." Emma failed to pose quite as he wished; he took her head and slightly tilted it. "Now! Did ye ever see features more perfect?"

"Never!" Sir William emphatically acknowledged.

Throughout the autumn he made a practice of coming once a week to Edgware Row; if his engagements permitted, he came more often. Generally he and Charles drove out to tea at seven o'clock; sometimes Greville remained, but more often uncle and nephew returned to London. The Envoy had a charming and genial manner, and a talent for making those in his company feel as sparkling and witty as he appeared to think them. He and Emma were on the best of terms, and frequently reached a pitch of hilarity that caused the grave, philosophic Charles to raise his eyebrows. Sir William stored up and recounted the gossip of the town; described with humorous gusto routs and receptions; told tales against himself so candidly that Emma marvelled. He brought her little presents: ribbons for her waist and hair; flowers; sweetmeats; the latest caricatures by Sayer and Gillray. She was grateful and enchanted. Greville, by impressing upon her his poverty, had weaned her from extravagant expectations and taught her to regard a gift as an event.

At fifty-two Sir William Hamilton was a well-preserved man-of-the-world, kindly, intelligent, conciliatory; a raconteur and ready conversationalist. In his person he was tall, thin, and gave an impres-

sion of strength and endurance. He had a narrow, oval face, a full, curving mouth, and the aquiline nose of the Abercorns, which Greville also inherited. Ruthless exposure to the sun during explorations at Pompeii, when harpooning fish in the Bay of Castel-à-Mare, and on hunting expeditions, had burnt his naturally dark complexion to the colour of walnut. Always immaculately dressed, he wore his clothes with the careless ease of a man who never wonders what impression he creates.

Greville, who deprecated the levity that so often manifested itself when Emma and his uncle were together, tried to guide the conversation into channels improving to her and interesting to himself. "Is it true," he inquired, "that Maria Carolina's influence increases? Travellers returning from Naples say she encourages Ferdinand's love of the chase in order to gather yet more power into her own hands."

Sir William negligently shrugged his shoulders. "She's Maria Theresa's daughter, and trained to be a ruling woman, but her abilities and the King's indolence would have given her the reins of government without any maternal encouragement."

"Even in a homely *milieu* it generally proves unfortunate when the natural balance between the sexes is reversed; in the management of a kingdom it may lead to disaster."

"She has at heart the interests of the people, and through her influence reforms have been introduced that are recognized by the majority as beneficial to the State. In giving encouragement to such men as Mario Pagano, Galliani, Gaetano Filangieri, she secured many friends among the *savants*; to some extent they counterbalance the enemies made when she threw the Marchese Tanucci from office."

"'Tis a mistake," said the cautious Greville, "to act precipitately; she would have done wisely to wait until Tanucci was tripped by one of the many pitfalls awaiting the statesman."

"That's just what Carolina did," chuckled Sir William: "the two of them had been duelling for years, without either remitting their guard; Tanucci was the poorer swordsman and fell. It was a stipulation of Carolina's marriage-contract that she should be entitled to a place in the council and a voice in the government of the Two Sicilies when she bore Ferdinando a son. Some seven years elapsed before the event took place; when it did, she naturally claimed her right. Tanucci, aware that her increased power would be directed to

liberating the Sicilies completely from Spanish domination, foolishly advised Ferdinando to go back on his agreement. Thus the King's chief Minister accomplished his own doom; '*hinc illæ lacrimæ*.'"

"The Marquis della Sambuca did not last long as his successor!"

"He hadn't sufficient knowledge of finance to increase revenues for the growing expense of the palace and at the same time to reduce the burdens of taxation. A high reputation as a political economist has saddled old Marchese Caracciolo with the problem, and I suspect him of often regretting his recall from the comfortable sinecure of Neapolitan Ambassador to the French Court."

"One of Caracciolo's sons comported himself with some distinction in our Naval service during the late war, did he not?"

"Francesco; he learnt seamanship under Rodney, and it is going to stand him in good stead when Maria Carolina has built a fleet as large as her ambition."

"One would suppose a small navy sufficient to defend the coast and overawe the little princelings of Barbary."

"Tanucci carried out the policy of his Spanish master so well that Ferdinando was dependent on his father in Madrid for the defence of the Two Sicilies, a state of affairs intolerable to the daughter of Maria Theresa."

"What are Ferdinand's views?"

"His Sicilian Majesty thinks only of persecuting boars, wolves, *chevreuil*, and foxes, and so masterly is his management in this direction that two thousand are often slaughtered in one campaign. No European sovereign, without exception, has been so ill educated as the King of Naples. His ordinary Italian is a Neapolitan dialect such as the *lazzaroni* speak in their intercourse with each other; only by making a painful effort can he understand French."

Emma listened to the conversation with rising excitement; she felt transported into a world larger than her own, where dynasties were made and lives broken. Ambition, long dormant, reasserted itself; she felt again the urge for glory that possessed her months before, when Captain Willett Payne described Lord Howe's defence of Sandy Hook. Then she would have been a fighting Admiral, now she craved power to build a nation, to make and unmake monarchies. . . .

Her glance fell upon Greville, impassive and handsome beside his case of minerals. Like a quenched flame, ambition flickered and expired. Was it not enough that dear Charles loved her? . . . Or a

least liked her a little . . . That by striving to deserve his good opinion she might hope to pass happy days, weeks, and years under his protection? Good God! What more could a girl wish than the blessing of sharing a home with a man more perfect than any King? . . .

Picking up her needle, she bent her lovely head over a cravat for her hero.

Sir William Hamilton was about to set out on a short visit to the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton, thence to Fonthill to his cousin, William Beckford, three months married to Lady Margaret Gordon.

"Though I appreciate the compliment, I think 'tis hardly decent to ask an old stick like myself to an abode of newly wedded lovers."

Anxious to comfort, Emma rushed into impetuous speech: "But indeed you're not really old, Sir Will'um; and I'm sure there are many women still in looks who would find it a pleasure to wed you."

Silence, heavy as substance, settled upon the room; Sir William's mortification was apparent without Greville's coldly accusing face. Emma blushed at her own *gaucherie*. What could she have been thinking of to remind Sir Will'um that he was no longer young? . . .

Zest had gone from the evening. Greville did his best to smooth matters by discoursing on crystals of native nitre, but was unable to restore the pleasant atmosphere. When taking his leave, Sir William clasped Emma's hands, saying wistfully: "Adieu, fair tea-maker; think kindly of the old man."

Overcome by contrition, she threw her arms round his neck. "Oh, Sir Will'um, I will! I will!"

The night to which Emma looked forward was spoilt by Greville's scolding. To the punishment of her own remorse he added grave rebuke: "Sir William always regards himself as my contemporary, a circumstance I consider very flattering in view of my uncle's distinguished position. A well-preserved man of fifty-two may count himself in his prime without fear of ridicule, yet you took upon yourself to think otherwise; you also ran counter to my wishes by suggesting marriage. In my opinion a *friend* would better contribute to his happiness than a wife. He is a general flirt, and by speaking of the possibility, you put it in his mind."

"Greville, I meant no harm, and if you'll show me how to make amends, I'll do anything."

"I said I wished you to please Sir William and to encourage his visits, but your conduct this night may well have disgusted him."

Emma's pride was touched. "If I set about it, I can wipe out that mistake."

On the following morning she rose early to write a note to Sir William which Greville was to carry back to town. When on her mettle Emma knew the trick of subtle flattery:

"Endeed, my dear Sir William, I hope you will believe me sincere when I write to you; for everything flows from my heart, and I cannot stop it. Before you go awhay I must tell you how much I shall miss your visits to Edgware Row and say how I long for there resumption in the near future. O if I could express myself! If I had words to thank you for your kindness. I wish you was hear that I could tell you better how I am ever your truly affectionate *Emma*.

P.S. Could you come once more to Paddington before you leave town? It would make me happy."

Confident that the blunder was retrieved, she sealed the paper and entrusted it to Greville. In the afternoon Sir William sent a return letter in an equally affectionate vein; but he made no reference to Emma's invitation, and set out for Wiltshire on the 11th of November; the day that Mr. Fox presented his India Bill to Parliament.



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

AFTER Sir William left town, Emma looked forward to a larger share of Greville's society. It was a sanguine wish. Supporter of the Court and hitherto an adherent of Lord North, Greville opposed the India Bill, though he refrained from voting against it, an expedient devised to cause least offence to the two Secretaries of State: Fox and North. Policy which dictated public neutrality did not prohibit assiduous work in private; discreet efforts to defeat the measure left little time for dalliance in Edgware Row. Emma, whose interest in politics was unawakened, received through songs bawled in the streets and from Sayer's caricatures impressions of a controversy that rocked the country.

The proposal of the Bill to transfer the Government of India from the East India Company to seven Commissioners, chosen by Parliament and not removable at the pleasure of the King, would confer upon the Ministerial Party patronage to the value of three hundred thousand pounds per annum. When it became known that Earl Fitzwilliam, Fox's most intimate friend, was to be Chairman of the proposed Board, and Lord North's eldest son a member, Tories and Democrats joined in declaring the Board a cabal of Fox's nominees, and the measure a piece of jobbery designed to give, not to the Crown, but to him personally, whether in office or opposition, a power sufficient to counterbalance the patronage of the Treasury and of the Admiralty and to decide the election of fifty boroughs. Stated to be equally hateful to King and people, Fox was accused of plotting to make himself independent of both. Long dazzled by the wealth brought home by English nabobs, the public did not concern itself over the injustice and rapacity whereby the riches had been gained. The plan to deprive the Company of their vested rights was naturally obnoxious to the India directors, and they freely employed their immense riches in fostering opposition. Despite the manifold

objections to the Bill, it passed through the House with large majorities and was sent to the Lords.

Sir William, returning to town in the midst of the agitation, declared that invitations to Opposition dinners and receptions left no time for a visit to Paddington. Greville, harassed by Court and parliamentary duties, again deplored the *faux pas* that had released his susceptible relative from Emma's spell. Circuitous manœuvrings and Emma's ingenuous letters were alike unavailing; the elderly diplomat was elusive, and only from Mary Hamilton's mischievous hints did Greville learn that his future was in jeopardy. Charles and his cousin Mary, maid-of-honour to the Queen, were rivals for Sir William's favours, the nephew designing to be heir apparent, the niece foremost in her uncle's regard. To attain her ambition, Mary Hamilton sought to please the gay Ambassador by surrounding him with young and charming women, school friends each on the lookout for an eligible *parti*. In mid-December Sir William accepted an invitation to Bulstrode, and Greville breathed more freely; the Duchess of Portland's collection of *virtù* could be relied upon to deflect a dilettante from the dangers of romance.

Meanwhile the diminishing influence of the Crown and the King's personal dislike of his Ministers prompted His Majesty to communicate privately with the Opposition chiefs measures for bringing them back to power. On the day of the second reading of the India Bill in the House of Lords the King authorized Lord Temple to let it be known he would regard as enemies all who voted for it. In consequence the Opposition proposed an adjournment which was carried by a majority of eight, and on the 17 of December the Bill was finally thrown out. The two Secretaries of State, Mr. Fox and Lord North, ordered to deliver up the seals, sent them by Under-Secretaries, as the King found "a personal interview on the occasion would be disagreeable to him". The Court party being thus strengthened, Greville, in sanguine mood, hastened to lay down his badge of office, confident that at no distant date he would be rewarded by a more remunerative post.

In recounting the incident to Emma, he dwelt on the King's desire for retention. "His Majesty was kind enough to show me partiality and desired me not to commit an act so unnecessary, the Treasurership of the Household being, not a Ministerial, but a personal situation in the family of the Sovereign. In Mr. Fox's favour I must add that he urged me to remain, at the same time absolving me from

all motives of a political nature. Many might consider my decision imprudent, and I know it is not the way most suited to preferment, but I have sufficient of the world to hold myself as high with a reduced as with a more ample income."

"Sir Will'um will be sorry," Emma observed.

"He knows I am a good jobber for a friend but an awkward one for myself," was Greville's complacent answer.

On her own account Emma was relieved by her lover's withdrawal from office. While he lived a bachelor life in Portman Square she was haunted by jealous fears of Henrietta Willoughby, her pretty face and her thirty thousand pounds. Meetings must be constant between friends who were next-door neighbours, and what girl could resist Charles if she were thrown in his company? Foreboding, dark as the winter landscape, held Emma in a merciless grip. She was no more secure than a stray cat taken in and given shelter. . . . At any moment safety and happiness might be swept away. . . . Greville never said their connexion was permanent, but neither had he hinted at an end. . . . Her own wisdom told her to prepare. . . . How ominous that he would not say: "I love you." Carefully and often she had laid the trap, but he never fell in. . . . She must work for it, plan for it. . . . Such an admission would be binding as a parson's blessing, because Greville never went back on his word. . . .

Sir William, making curiosity his pretext, paid an unexpected visit to Edgware Row on the Sunday before Christmas, the day observed for casting bread and cheese from the tower of Paddington Church. The charity, designed for the worthy poor, was disbursed annually after divine service upon riff-raff from the town, who at an early hour established themselves in the graveyard.

Examining Malta fossils under his microscope, Greville was unaware of his uncle's arrival until Emma ran into the hall crying: "Sir Will'um, Sir Will'um, if 'twasn't that Greville might be jealous, I'd give you a dozen kisses to show my happiness at seeing you!"

Touched and charmed by her fervent welcome, the Envoy took her hands. "Charles can't grudge me one!"

Throwing her arms round his neck, Emma made her kiss so warm and loving that he emerged quite shaken. His apologetic glance discovered Greville hospitably intent on drawing a chair to the fire. Reassured, Sir William genially rallied his nephew: "Come, Charles, out with you into the frost for the Bread and Cheese Charity!"

The Envoy wore a rich travelling-cloak lined with sable, Greville donned a shabby green cloth coat good enough to wear in a rustic place, and Emma muffled herself in the cameline shawls that served so many purposes. It was a bleak day, with a north wind that parched the earth and gave a clean-bitten edge to every object. Acutely susceptible to cold, Greville hunched his shoulders and thrust his hands into threadbare pockets. His aristocratic, melancholy countenance was pinched and mottled, and his whole aspect one of spartan endurance.

Sir William looked at him anxiously. "You should wear something warmer, Charles; 'tis most dangerous to court a chill when you're so easily put out of order."

"Pray be not uneasy, Hamilton," Greville responded through chattering teeth. "I am hardening myself, which I think you will agree is a wise method of overcoming disabilities. Also, by wearing old clothes in Paddington I save my good ones for town, and thus contrive to face the world with *éclat* despite my loss of income."

Sir William's genial face betrayed deeper concern. "But, my dear Charles, even so meritorious a determination must be governed by reason, and the coat you are wearing is scarce thick enough to face an autumn evening. I cannot bear to think that your necessities require so stringent a remedy."

"Your gloom and your kindness would make one imagine I was sinking under misfortunes, whereas the exact reverse is the case. By accepting vicissitudes, I overcome them: *magnum est vectigal parsimonia*."

"If you give yourself a pleurisy, you may sink into a grave, and where then will be your economy? Seriously, Charles, I cannot bear to see ye looking so starved, and I must beg ye to return to your comfortable fire and leave Emma and me to watch the cheeses thumping down upon the indigent."

"Do go back," Emma pleaded; "or if you will not, take one of these shawls."

Sir William stopped her impetuous gesture. "Nonsense, my dear; if Charles is so foolish as to court death, there's no need for you to act as his proxy. Be complacent in your shawls, as I am in my cloak."

"To so much opposition I must surrender, but I assure you I am perfectly comfortable notwithstanding my appearance, which apparently is against me. However, as ye both seem to think ye'd be happier alone, I'll go back and read the last number of the *Spectator*."

Greville's tone was perfectly good-humoured, and he waved his hand as he turned about.

Emma's heart was torn by her lover's resolute challenge to adversity. "I would I were not such an expense!"

"My sweet Emma, 'tis not the frugal ménage here that has caused embarrassment, but 12 Portman Square, which hangs like a millstone round his neck. 'Tis certain destruction for a younger brother to pretend to keep house in London. Twenty-five years ago I did the same, and was obliged to sell my collection of pictures, on which I doted, rather than bear to be dunned."

"Dear Sir Will'um, tell Greville how you mastered your difficulties, that he may do so too."

"Having no companion like you, my dear, left me free to mend my fortune by marrying, something against my inclination, a virtuous, good-tempered woman with a little fortune to which we could fly if all other dependencies failed."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, if Greville did that I believe I should die!"

"Wipe your lovely eyes, Em; we'll seek to put Charles on his feet by selling his house; also I'll try to secure him free quarters in the Royal Mews."

"You can't think what a weight 'twould lift from my mind!"

His sunburnt face wrinkled into a whimsical smile. "If those hopes fail, this I can promise: a warm coat from my tailor so ugly that Charles will only wear it out of London."

They had climbed upon the flat top of George Bushnell's tomb to be above the ragged invaders from the town. Beggars, cripples, rogues, and frail old people crowded the small burial-ground, the stoutest forming a scuffling mass beneath the ancient bell-turret and extinguisher. Shouts and huzzahs greeted the parson and sexton as they appeared and edged along the narrow arris 'twixt spire and turret coping. The sexton dragged a sack containing small cottage loaves and little round cheeses, which he took out and arranged alternately along the parapet for the vicar, a powerful man of saturnine countenance, to dispense in the manner of a grenadier in action. Casualties, struggling from the *melée*, hugged a cheese and cursed the parson; a cripple who had fallen and been trampled upon was extracted and laid out on a tombstone.

"I am reminded of the *lazzaroni* fed by the King of Naples on the last night of Carnival," Sir William remarked.

Emma looked up with a face of bewitching curiosity. "Are *lazzaroni* beggars, and does the King pelt them with bread?"

"He treats them to a dish more to their liking: macaroni dressed with oil and cheese, which he flings steaming upon his yelling subjects from the royal box at San Carlo. On the last night of the *fête* the pit of the opera house is thrown open to the poor, and the deluge of hot macaroni is the popular event of the evening."

"How I wish I could see it!"

'You must come with Charles to visit me; 'twould be a charity, for I find my great house very lonely.'

Emma was delighted that Sir William appeared to have forgotten the hurt she had inflicted before he went away. Experienced in amorous manifestations, she recognized as a certain sign of partiality the fixed, glassy stare bent upon her. She was flattered and proud to have won the admiration of so polished and distinguished a gentleman, and well pleased with herself for carrying out Greville's wishes.

A scurry of snow drove them from the graveyard before the ceremony was over; half-way across the green, Emma turned to look back. Overshadowed by the black foliage of a yew tree, the small, countrified church looked like a grey hen sheltering under a hedge.

Lifting his cloak, Sir William placed it about Emma's shoulders, at the same time drawing her close to his side. "It's snowing faster," he explained unsteadily.

It was no longer necessary for Greville to issue special invitations to his uncle. Sir William came without persuasion, candidly avowing his preference for the simple entertainment of Edgware Row. He taught Emma to call him Pliny, explaining to her the many points of resemblance between himself and Gaius Plinius Secundus. Both he and the Roman began their careers as soldiers; both were philosophers and keen observers of natural phenomena. Pliny the Elder studied Vesuvius in A.D. 79; he, Sir William, had started to make careful observations in A.D. 1779; but whereas Pliny had lost his life at the age of fifty-six, in the great eruption that overwhelmed Pompeii and Herculaneum, Sir William hoped to spend many more years retrieving treasures from the buried cities. A beloved nephew shared the tastes and hobbies of the Elder Pliny: Pliny the Younger was a *dilettante* and a philosopher; there was no evidence that he collected minerals, but a purchase was recorded of a Corinthian bronze. . . .

Henceforth Emma called her elderly admirer by the name he pre-

ferred, except in public, when she punctiliously referred to him as "Sir Will'um".

Greville, now that his time was his own, wholeheartedly threw himself into his uncle's affairs, and undertook all arrangements for exhibiting the Barberini Vase at the Museum of Sculpture in Whitehall. Sir William escorted Emma to a private view of his treasure, and afterwards to the Opera House in the Haymarket to hear the *castrato*, Gasparo Pacchierotti, in *Medonte*. Shrinking from the sensation which Emma's beauty occasioned, Greville made business a pretext for avoiding unwelcome attention. His reluctance suited Sir William perfectly, and he seized the opportunities it afforded. "The dear fellow is an admirable man of affairs, and so diligent on my behalf that I expect to be rich as one of the English ' nabobs ' who incense Messrs. Fox and Burke. Now, my dear Em, while Charles works to sell my *virtù*, you and I will amuse ourselves watching the gay world."

Trained to expect no other excitement than the weekly sittings to Mr. Romney, plays, operas, and exhibitions were a delight; yet, charmed as she was, Emma would have chosen home and candle-light with Greville to the most brilliant entertainment Sir William could offer.

"I wish someone would buy the glass vase and other antiquities so you might have more time to spend with me, for indeed, Greville, I find little pleasure in the grandest spectacle when you are not there."

"My dear Emma, your sense and readiness to select the good in every situation will make you agree that my uncle's preference lays upon me a special obligation to exert myself to the utmost in his interests. Without my aid his natural indolence would deprive him of many likely markets."

But the sale of the Barberini Vase for eighteen hundred guineas to the Dowager Duchess of Portland was achieved by the volatile diplomat; likewise the disposal of 12 Portman Square to Douglas, Duke of Hamilton; also the skilful management of King George which procured for Greville the promise of rooms in the Royal Mews.

Misinterpreting his nephew's damaged pride as jealousy over Emma, Sir William guiltily pressed Greville to accompany them to Drury Lane to see *The Duenna*.

"I've seen it more often than I want," the younger man responded, with unusual petulance. "'Tis not one of Sheridan's best plays, and I fear 'twould but aggravate my headache."

"Then I won't go either, please, Sir Will'um," cried Emma. "If I

went I'd be but poor company, thinking all the while of Greville in pain."

It ended in the trio spending the evening at Edgware Row, good humour being restored by a dinner prepared and cooked by Mrs. Cadogan.

"I've never tasted more delicious stewed lampreys, nor a better roasted fillet of veal," Sir William observed.

"You should try mother's Irish stews," Emma proudly returned; "'tis a homely dish, but none so good to my thinking."

On rising from his wine, Sir William sought Mrs. Cadogan in the small ante-room off the library, where the redoubtable woman sat writing to Mr. Pitt by the light of a single candle.

"'Twill never be posted," she explained, "but I take greater pains if I pretend my letters will be read."

Sir William picked up the paper the better to admire her graceful penmanship. "This does ye credit."

"Two years ago I could only put a cross for my name, now I nearly master *The Gentleman's Magazine*."

"You and Emma make a remarkable pair!"

"We're both industrious."

"Emma is unique, and you could command in a wider sphere. I wish I had you to manage my kitchens at Palazzo Sessa. Italian cooks have waged war on my digestion for nineteen years; though they haven't succeeded in killing me, they have frequently laid me low."

Placidly confident, Mrs. Cadogan responded. "I drill them!"

Sir William curtailed his visits until, deeming Greville's jealousy abated, he brought a suggestion that Emma should sit for her portrait to Sir Joshua Reynolds, a picture commissioned by Sir William to hang in his house at Naples.

Emma was enchanted till she recollected Sir Joshua's antagonism for his rival in Cavendish Square. "Indeed I'd be proud to sit, were it not for Romney. After all his kindness I couldn't hurt him; so, Sir Will'um, I'll be obliged to say 'thank you' and 'no.'"

Greville supported the objection: "Romney has shown so much disinterest in painting Emma that it places us in a delicate position in regard to Sir Joshua, who, with little provocation, has acted very high to Romney. Emma is now sitting for a Bacchante that promises to be a picture worthy of your collection; I have an option on it that could be transferred if you desired possession."

"Purchasing from both artists would avoid offence, and be pleas-

ing to me, as I would rather have two pictures of Emma than one. 'Tis against the interests of art that her sittings be restricted to Romney, but leave the matter to me, and I'll contrive it to every-one's satisfaction."

Emma had her first sitting to Sir Joshua in early April, driving with Sir William in a hackney-coach to Leicester Square. Garbed in a plain white dress, she was again posed as a Bacchante; moving to the right with her forefinger to her lips, she looked laughingly over her shoulder at an unseen spectator who was Sir William. Afterwards she remarked to Greville: "The subject might be what you please, for there are none of the garnishings sacred to Bacchus."

The finely furnished octagonal studio in Leicester Square had little in common with Romney's painting-room; nor did Reynolds resemble his younger rival. Sir Joshua was as fine a gentleman as Sir William, as ready in conversation, as polished in manner, but though indulgent and bland, he failed to put Emma at ease, and she was glad when the hour was over.

Stepping from Sir Joshua's door, they were dazzled by sunshine; the square was gay with finely dressed people strolling on the pavements and sauntering round the equestrian statue of George I in the centre of the garden. Shrubs and trees were bursting into leaf, birds circled overhead; high in the sky over Saville House a red paper kite with a long tail ducked and floated on the breeze.

At Emma's suggestion they walked past Dr. Graham's new premises in Panton Street, where he and "Hebe Vestina" demonstrated for one hour each day the new cult of earth-bathing. Immersed naked in the ground to their chins, the doctor and the goddess could be viewed in the back garden for half-a-crown, their full-dressed, powdered heads emerging like a couple of prize cauliflowers from a flower-bed. The new Temple of Health wore the insignia of its predecessors; a tarnished gilt sun and the legend: *Templum Aesculapio Sacrum*, now bent in a semi-circle to fit a narrow frontage.

"Like other famous quacks, Dr. Graham has over-exploited a credulous public," Sir William remarked. "Equally impudent claims will be accepted from other charlatans, but explode the reputation of one of these bombastic fellows, and 'tis gone for ever."

"Dr. Graham gave good advice to those who listened; fresh air and daily baths are both healthful, yet most of his patients preferred to buy a pot of expensive ointment than wash themselves. As the gentry wished to spend, 'tis not to be wondered he took advantage."

"One inclines to expend too much sympathy on the rich fool, and often the audacious quack is no wiser, for he quickly loses what his trickery has gained. The improvidence of all classes is greatly to be deplored."

On returning to Edgware Row, they found Greville lamenting the same infirmity. Fresh from a stormy interview with Lord Warwick, he voiced his feelings with less than his usual caution. "I fear economy is not to be found in our family, and I despair of George ever living within his means. His passion for horses continues despite lack of income. A determination to have a set of six carriage-horses exactly matching has caused him to discard many valuable animals at loss to himself and gain to his servants and agents. He ignores the prudent course of entering transactions in a pocket-book, and thus renders himself the victim of the vilest impositions."

"With his credit in such a broken state, how does Lord Warwick meet the prompt payments required by horse-courers?" inquired Sir William.

Greville dryly returned: "Purchases are charged at double their value to compensate for a deficiency of ready money."

The Earl of Warwick's financial embarrassments coming to a head in the previous year had caused him to apply to his wife's half-brother, the Earl of Upper Ossory, for assistance to save the Castle treasures from numerous executions levelled upon them. Taking the initiative at a family council, Greville proposed the institution of a Trust, composed of Lord Ossory, Sir James Peachy and himself, to control the estate, clear it of mortgages and to secure for Lady Warwick an income for the family support. Having of necessity signed the deed of consignment, the Earl held his brother in special odium.

Neither of Greville's co-trustees being disposed to inconvenience themselves, it devolved upon him to visit Amptill Park and West Dean. Such a tour being imminent, it was to be extended, at Sir William's suggestion, into Wales. Meeting at Bristol, uncle and nephew planned to travel in company to Haverfordwest, and from thence examine the possibilities of Sir William's Pembrokeshire estate. During their absence Emma and Mrs. Cadogan were to go to Abergele for Emma to bathe, drink salt water and apply tang to a troublesome rash on her elbows and knees, a treatment that would augment the benefits from Peruvian bark prescribed by the doctor.

Greville had selected Abergele because Hawarden was *en route*. It was time to place Emma's child in an establishment for training in

self-support. He sighed, contemplating this fresh drain on his lean purse, but the burden had to be shouldered, or it would become heavier with the years.

"When I'm on my travels I'll inquire for a school or home where the girl will be taught to be useful and independent."

"Dearest Greville, you'll let her first come home to Paddington?"

"Not if it can be avoided," he firmly rejoined.

Cognizant of feminine reactions to decisions that opposed their wishes, Greville prudently made his pronouncement on the eve of his departure for Ampthill. "Women," he observed to Sir William, "have only resource in Art; there is to them no interval between plain ground and the precipice; their springs of action are so much in the extreme of sublime and low, that no absolute dependence can be given by men. For this reason I always have anticipated cases to prepare their mind to reasonable conduct."

Rattling alone in a hackney-coach to a sitting at Romney's studio, Emma's behaviour substantiated Greville's contention but denied his sophistry. In removing "little Emma" from Dame Kidd's care, Emma detected no plan more far-reaching than a generous urge to give her a holiday with her child. Reflections on her lover's "divine goodness", and the dangers that might await him on the road, reduced her to a sorry pass, and it took the united efforts of Sir William, Romney and William Hayley to console her.

"'Tis the thought that to-morrow I may be bidding Charles good-bye for ever that makes me act so weak."

"Nonsense," Sir William rallied; "he'll come back all the fonder for the separation."

"'Tis a great way he's going, and dreadful disasters overtake travellers."

"Blest be the heart of sympathetic mould,
Whatever form that gentle heart infold,
Whose generous fibres with fond terror shake."

Mr. Hayley quoted from his elegant poetical composition, *The Triumphs of Temper*. He had with him a new copy, bound in tooled and gilded calf, for presentation to Emma. The squire of Eartham had become one of her most enthusiastic admirers, and, like Sir William, frequented Romney's studio when she was the model. Emma was sitting three days in succession in order that *The Spinstress* could be finished before she left for North Wales. Greville, departing early on

the morrow, was to fetch her; as a valediction Romney had two bottles of champagne on ice in the sink.

"What a pair you are!" laughed Sir William. "'Twould be difficult to decide which was the most wretched: Romney at losing his 'divine lady', or Emma at parting from her 'dearest Greville'!"

"I suffer indeed," the artist sighed as he painted.

Sir William nodded significantly to Mr. Hayley. "*Omnis amans amens.*"

"Please, Sir Will'um," Emma cried, "don't use foreign language, for Mr. Romney and I know naught but English."

The poet intervened: "Sweet girl, Sir William meant to say with Antoninus: 'It is the privilege of human nature above brutes, to love those that disoblige us.'"

Morosely looking up from his painting, Romney muttered: "Don't 'ee believe either of them, Emma, for both laugh at our pain."

Emma posed beside a spinning-wheel close to Mr. Hayley, who, lolling in an arm-chair, clasped the book he had flourishingly inscribed:

"From the Bard of Eartham to Emma Hart,
Whose quick vibrations, without end, impart
Pleasure and pain to the responsive heart."

A tripod table separated the poet from Sir William Hamilton, enjoying hot sunshine streaming through the window. Greville, entering silently, approached the group and tapped his uncle on the shoulder. "At last you've found *un luogo aprico*."

"Romney is not so fearful of fading his carpets and hangings as most folk in this temperate island."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, you mean that for me, and 'tis Greville, not I, who wants the sun shut out."

"My purse, and not my inclination, dictate the measure," he gravely reminded.

Having done as much work on the picture as he wished, Romney took up a block of paper and started to sketch Greville conversing with Sir William and the poet. "You shall have this to carry with you on your travels, Emma; 'twill afford comfort when miles separate you from Mr. Greville." His voice was suppressed and his face grimly set.

Jumping up, Emma ran eagerly to thank him. "Go back," he cried. "How can I work if you will not keep your place?"

That night, when Greville counted twenty-five pounds for Emma to take with her to Wales, he again stressed the need for economy. "You should not exceed two guineas a week for lodgings, or the money will not last into July. There will be extra expenses for bathing, and something will be owing to your grandmother for the child's keep."

"'Tis a great sum—I never thought to take so much from you; if I can save and bring some back, I will!"

"You'll need it all; I only regret sending you forth with so small a margin. Mind you steel your heart against beggars who would work on your pity."

"I'm not so weak that way as I was; the expensive part will be coach fares and lodgings, for I fear there'll be nothing reasonable at Abergele, as it is much favoured by rich gentry. If 'tis too dear, we'll go to Mrs. Ladmore's cottage at Parkgate; she'd make us comfortable, and charge little."

"I'd rather you avoided places where you have friends and relatives. 'Twould be easy for my name to slip out, and I have no desire to be the focus of gossip."

"I wouldn't make a mistake, but I'll do as you wish, and go to a strange place. If Abergele doesn't do, there's High Lake, which is so tiny it couldn't cost dear."

Greville smiled, and kissed her lingeringly. "I rely on your good judgment."

Never had he been so kind, so loving, so considerate. When the post-chaise arrived in the early morning, Emma clung to him in passionate despair. "Oh, God! Suppose you was never to come back! Indeed you don't know how much I love you, for I have gratitude, and I will show it to you. So don't think of my faults, Greville. Think of all my good, and blot out all my bad; for it is all gone and buried, never to come again. So good-bye, my love; think of nobody but me, for I have not a thought but of you. God bless you, God bless you for ever!"

Sir William Hamilton did his best to divert Emma in the two days that elapsed before she and her mother took coach to Chester. He entertained her royally in a box at Vauxhall, and drove her to Richmond in a high-flyer borrowed from General Conway, thence to Windsor to watch the King and Queen parading on the Terrace. Enchanted by the splendours she beheld and the commanding air of her esquire, Emma laughed, exclaimed and found a hundred bewitching

ways of expressing thanks; only when something reminded her of Greville did her face cloud and her eyes brim with tears. On the first of these occasions Sir William brought out his handkerchief, remarking: "Did you weep for anyone but Charles I might feel jealousy; as it is, I must be his deputy and comfort you as well as I am able."

He would have kissed her beautiful mouth, explaining that the caress was paternal and the natural means of conveying sympathy between human beings. But Emma, once so lavish with her kisses, stoutly denied him. "Indeed my lips belong to Greville, only to Greville!"

Sir William rose early to see the travellers off from the 'George and Blue Boar.' Emma was in tears, but still maintained resolve. "Dear Pliny, you are so kind and good I'd give you a kiss if my situation did not prevent me; next to Greville I love you better than anybody!"

"I would I were his heir apparent, as he is mine!"

As a consolation Emma kissed her fingers, and, leaning out of the coach, laid them on his lips. "Sir Will'um, that's my promise to give a proper one when Greville is come home!"

Mrs. Cadogan was to stay at Chester with her sister, Catherine Moore, leaving Emma to finish the long journey alone. Obedient to Greville's injunctions, Emma stayed at Hawarden only long enough to pack the child's clothes and to settle the amount owing to Dame Kidd. The Connors, the Kidds and the Reynoldses congregated in the Highway to see her set out in the carrier's cart for Chester, to criticize her good clothes and watch how little Emy took the separation from her gammer. Parting from the kind old woman proved a tearful ordeal; Emma pressed five guineas into her reluctant hand and kissed her twitching, wrinkled cheek; not until they had jolted a mile on the familiar road did Emma recollect that Greville might not approve such lavish payment. . . .

Mrs. Cadogan's inquiries had substantiated misgiving; lodgings at Abergele were not procurable under two-and-a-half guineas a week, with the additional cost of a forty-mile coach journey. Hoylake was equally unpromising, as it possessed only three houses, and "not one fit for a Christian."

Drinking negus with John Moore above his shop in Eastgate, they held a hasty consultation. "If we go to Parkgate we can't stop at Mrs. Ladmore's, because she's come here to live," said Mrs. Cadogan.

Emma responded: "Mr. Hart said we weren't to go to Parkgate."

"You've no option, bach, unless you've a fancy to lodge in the public-house on Hilbre Island."

While John Moore went to order the coach from the 'White Lion,' Emma scribbled a note to Greville:

"Chester, Saturday morning.

My dear Greville,

I have had no letter from you yett, which makes me unhappy. I can't go to Abbergelly, as it is forty miles, and a very uncumfotable place, and I am now going to Parkgate, as it is the only place beside High Lake I can go to; but I will try to go there. . . ."

In the coach, lumbering over the wet sands to Shotwick Creek, Emma and her mother argued where they would stay, and parried little Emy's noisy questioning. Mrs. Cadogan viewed her granddaughter with disfavour. "She's badly behaved, and you don't know how to manage her; children must be treated firm, or they get the upper hand."

Drawing up her cotton skirt, little Emy exposed her fat, naked legs. "Want to pick a daisy," she lisped.

By the time the whitewashed and red-ochred houses of Parkgate were in sight, Emma was distracted and in agreement with her mother. "I couldn't bear another twelve miles to High Lake."

"I should think not indeed, cooped up with a child who has no manners!"

After inspecting many lodgings, they decided to board with Mrs. Darnwood, subsequently described to Greville as "a Lady whose husband is at sea". The three-storeyed grey-stone house stood in the centre of the parade, and, like its neighbours, was entered by an un-railed perron of slated steps. Before the single row of houses ran a narrow road, protected by the top of the sea-wall, which on the farther side dropped twenty feet to the sands. In course of years fishermen had worn into ladders, holes corroded in the red sandstone escarpment. Little Emma, who was big and bold for her age, soon climbed up and down like a monkey, but her mother, taking her cue from a young gentlewoman staying at the 'Talbot,' decorously walked quarter of a mile to the bevel.

Emma bathed every day from a horse van driven by a fat bathing-woman who also officiated as "dipper", making onslaughts so suddenly that her victim involuntarily drank a great deal of water. Though she found it very salt and disagreeable, Emma considered it all to the good, as a tumbler-glass of sea water was a part of the daily treatment. After a fortnight the eruptions on her knees and elbows

had almost disappeared, she felt well and looked more beautiful than ever before; but for uneasiness over Greville she could have been moderately happy. Since he set out from Edgware Row, no line had come from him. Fears of all kinds harassed her mind. Morbid visions of accidents competed with jealous doubts and harsh forebodings. Fleeing from panic, Emma roamed to Burton Rocks, where wild-fowl called eerily from the sighing reeds; to Nesse, that had rung to the clang of her father's hammer; to Raby Mere, glittering in the sunshine or brooding in the melancholy half-tones of a clouded day. For comfort she had recourse to letter-writing, a gazette of her feelings that ran from day to day because she knew not where to direct it:

"If you had not behaved with such angel-like goodness to me at parting, it would not have had such an effect on me, but I have done nothing but think of you since, & O Greville, did you but know when I so think, what thoughts—what tender thoughts, you would say Good God & can Emma have such feeling senceibility—no; I never could think it, but now I hope to bring her to conviction & she may now prove a valluable & aimable whoman—true, Greville & you shall not be disapointed. I will be everything you can wish. But mind you Greville your troo great goodness has brought this about, for you dont know what I am. Would you think it Greville—Emma—the wild unthinking Emma is a grave thoughtful phylosopher. Tis true Greville & I will convince you I am when I see you. But how I am runing on—I say nothing abbout this guidy wild girl of mine: what shall we do with her, Greville, she is as wild & as thoughtless as somebody when she was a little girl, so you may gess how that is. Whether you will like it or no there is no telling, but one comfort is she is a little afraid on me. Would you believe on satturday whe had a little quarel, I mean Emma & me & I did slap her on her hands & when she came to kiss me & make it up I took her on my lap & cried. Now do you blame me or not, pray tell me. Oh Greville, you dont know how I love her, endead, I do, when she comes & looks in my face & calls me Mother. Endead, I then truly am a mother for all the mothers feilings rise at once & tels me I am or ought to be a mother, for she has a wright to my protection & she shall have it as long as I can & I will do all in my power to prevent her falling into the errors her poor once miserable mother fell into. But why do I say miserable. Am not I happy abbove any of my sex, at least in my situation, does not

Greville love me, or at least like me, does not he protect me. . . . No, it whas a mistake & I will be happy. . . . But, Greville, I am obliged to give a shiling a day for the bathing horse & whoman & twopence a day for the dress: it is a great expense & it fretts me wen I think of it. . . .”

Eventually she received a letter that had lain for a fortnight at Hawarden. Illiterate and self-disciplined, Dame Kidd was unable to apprehend tormenting anxieties. Buoyed up by Greville's kind expressions, Emma finished her gazette, posted it, and started another. She wrote on her knee, seated on the broad sandstone coping of the sea-wall. When inspiration failed she looked across the waste of wet sands to the Welsh mountains, a green amphitheatre extending north and south, or she gazed fondly down at her mother and little Emma, digging with pieces of bent iron for cockles.

Emma had not abandoned hope of having her child to live with her at Paddington Green—an idea that appeared sensible and easy of execution until she tried to express it in writing. She did her best, making up in fervour for lack of style; only after posting the letter was she appalled by her boldness.

Greville did not delay his answer nor soften his displeasure:

“I received yours, my dear Emma, and confess to feeling both wounded and provoked by your suggestion regarding the child. You agreed to leave her future in my hands and I undertook to establish her in a comfortable home and to provide her with a sound education. It is obvious from what you tell me that she has contracted many bad habits, and these would not be rectified by holidays, which tend to encourage impatience and inattention. A bad disposition may be corrected by good example, and this I hope will be achieved in the strict but comfortable home of a clergyman nr. Dunstable, who is willing to receive her. Your desire to have the child to live at Paddington shows little consideration for me, who would be bound to suffer neglect in so domestick a *ménage*. I must also reprove you for scrawling writing and ill spelling; now is the time, my dear girl, when you are away from yr. instructress, to show improvement.”

This epistle left Emma completely crushed, and she wrote back abjectly:

“Unkind Greville, yes I have got your letter but why do you scold me; if I wrote scral & ill, it was with thinking with two much kindness

on you. You have mad me unhappy by scolding me; how can you when you know my dispoition, when you know it breaks my heart to be scolded & speacily by Greville, but I wont think you meant it ill natured, tho you have maid me unhappy & if you had killd me, your kindness to my poor Emma would make me forget it for, endead, my Dear Greville, I love you two well to neglect you in any one point, so pray forgive me—& has to your goodness in regard to agreaments, endead I will come in to all as you propose. I will give her up to you intirely; do what you will with her, I here sollemnly say that I will never break from my word; you shall take her, put her where you propose. Lest any quarels—tho I hope there will be none—happen, she shall stay whear you propose puting her. Lett what will happen, & give her up to you to act as you think proper by her; take her, Greville, & may God reward you for it, tho her mother can't; all as I desire is, that you will lett me take her home, when I go to stay till you come to see her. I want you to see her whilst she is there; nobody shall see her, tho' neither you nor I need be asham'd of her. . . .”

Emma's despondency deepened as exile lengthened. Thrice weekly she watched for the postman, eagerly hoping he brought her recall; but Greville and Sir William had extended their travels to Scotland, and she had to wait until the end of July for permission to return. She packed immediately, although five days must elapse before she and the child took the London coach; Mrs. Cadogan's holiday was to be prolonged by visits to relatives across the estuary.

The joyfully anticipated home-coming proved a cruel disillusionment. There was no welcoming letter from Greville; Molly Dring allowed blowflies to settle on the meat; little Emy was rude and unmanageable. Emma felt desperately ill, and the rash she had supposed cured covered her from head to foot. Sinking beneath misfortunes, she believed herself to be forsaken by all. After a week of misery the rash abated and she was able again to look with pleasure in the glass; but relations with her daughter showed no improvement. They slapped each other more often than they kissed; Emma began to question if she had patience to make a good mother. . . .

Greville announced his impending return in a letter that might have discouraged one less determined to be pleased, so numerous were the stipulations:

“Before we resume a settled life,” he wrote, “I take this opportunity to point out changes I have long desired. It has become your

practice, my dear Emma, to use my apartment as if it was your own, and to interrupt me in my pursuits. In future if I wish to read or write or to sit still, *you must not disturb me*. On more than one occasion I have observed chagrin on your part if I propose absenting myself from Edgware Row. Our connexion cannot continue if my movements are questioned; when my avocations require my absence, *I will not be plagued by suspicions and jealousy*. . . .”

In her chastened mood Emma accepted all strictures with becoming humility; she asked no greater happiness than to live under Greville’s roof on any terms.

Through the dusk of evening he came back to find her waiting by the garden gate. The long separation had rendered her timid, and she met him shyly as a maid. Placing his hand under her chin, he forced her to look up. “Well, Emma, aren’t ye glad to see me?”

“So glad you can’t think! Indeed I believe I shall die from the pleasure of seeing you!”

“You’re looking bewitching, handsomer than ever!” In the darkness Greville held her close and sought her lips.

“Do you love me?” she demanded.

“You are enchanting,” he answered unsteadily, as he urged her up the path.

At the door Emma held him back to listen to a nightingale trying his notes; around them the warm air was sweet with scents of stocks and mignonette.

“You will never tell me,” she sighed.

“I’ll tell you what?”

“On—nothing. Did Sir Will’um send a message?”

“Yes; that he would come to-morrow to claim the promised kiss.”

Emma wistfully inquired: “Won’t you be affronted?”

“On the contrary, I welcome an opportunity to repay his many favours.”



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE administration of his Welsh estate, business connected with sales of pictures and *virtù*, farewell dinners and routs organized by his friends, monopolized Sir William during his last month in England, but he contrived a weekly tea-drinking at Edgware Row, and three days before setting out for Dover, he took Emma to watch the mail-coach from Bristol arrive at the post office. Mr. Pitt had sponsored a popular experiment, and for a month it had been the fashionable morning amusement to congregate in Lombard Street to cheer the coach that had carried the mails 114 miles in seventeen hours.

Unlike several members of the *beau monde*, whose carriage wheels were inextricably locked in the narrow thoroughfare, Sir William prudently dismissed his hired vehicle in the Poultry. Arm in arm, he and Emma edged along the crowded pavement until they encountered a crowd of people watching grooms from a private chariot, and two young men in a smart phaeton and pair, trying to disengage their wheels. Emma was agog to see what was happening; Sir William, standing on his toes for a better view, chuckled and remarked: "I might have guessed; only Hugh Conway and Willett Payne could get in such a tangle. 'Tis strange the ineptitude sea officers show for driving and horsemanship, yet how attracted they are by an art they never master." He would have pushed Emma to a better place had she not resisted.

"Oh, I can't, Sir Will'um!"

"Why ever not?"

"'Tis—'tis my garter, Sir Will'um, 'tis come untied!" Emma stammered.

"We'll go to the wall and I'll shelter you."

The Honourable Hugh Seymour Conway failed to hold the plung-

ing roans, the mare fell. Sir William shouted: "Sit on her head, Payne, sit on her head! My God! What a pair of nincompoops!" Pushing through the crowd, Sir William neatly executed his own command.

Emma was confounded by the new turn of events.. Bending down, she watched between the legs of those in front the Envoy competently directing Captain Conway in the unharnessing of the near horse while Captain Payne unbuckled the traces of the fallen mare. In a minute both animals were on their feet; Sir William patted them reassuringly and looked round for Emma, who was unobtrusively retreating whence she came. From a discreet distance she watched Sir William speak to Willett Payne and saw them glance towards the spot she had vacated. Fortunately the sound of a coach horn and the clatter of horses galloping along the Poultry provided a counter interest. A pair of bays, the glittering mail-coach, a coachman and guard in scarlet coats, swung into view. The waiting crowd cheered, waved handkerchiefs, flung hats in the air; the horses slowed to a walk; postmen in fiery-red uniforms ran forward to unload the bags from the boot.

Sir William found Emma outside Pidding's Lottery Office. Taking her arm, he looked banteringly into her lovely face. "Why did ye come posting here?"

"I was frightened," she answered truthfully.

"Fie, Em! My nephew Robert told me ye were the most fearless horsewoman he'd ever seen!"

"And so I am, but one can be frightened more ways than one!"

Taking her to Birch's in Cornhill, Sir William entertained her to breakfast at a table secluded inside a bastion of shelves and Sheffield plate soup tureens. "'Tis as well you ran away, sweet Em, or I might have incurred Charles's displeasure by acquainting you with a pair of the most amusing scamps in town: Hugh Conway and Jack Willett Payne."

Emma kept her eyes on her plate. "The two that got their phaeton in a tangle?"

"I've seen Payne do worse; he fancies himself as a whip, whereas he'd only be safe driving a hackney-coach horse, but as a member of a wealthy West Indian family, he can buy bloodstock and damn the consequences. He and the Prince of Wales have discovered themselves kindred spirits, and the carryings-on in Conduit Street cause serious disquiet at Windsor."

In a voice unlike her own, Emma asked: "Is Conduit Street where the sea officer lives?"

"Yes, in a house with Hugh and George Seymour Conway, but as the Earl of Hertford has no money to finance younger sons, I suspect Willett Payne supports the coterie."

"Greville never tells me such interesting things!"

"Charles, bless him, cannot feel interest in those whose pursuits are entirely venal, while I can find entertainment in every aspect of human folly. His fastidious temperament stands in his way and causes him to lose opportunities; it is my great regret on leaving that he is out of office and with no substantial prospects for the future. He is too independent in his opinions to expect support from his party, and while he may hope for a renewal of Court favour, he did himself no service in relinquishing the Treasureship of the Household in face of the King's remonstrance."

"Greville thinks the present Government won't last because Mr. Pitt is too young and inexperienced a leader; and 'tis true his new taxes please none."

"Taxes are never acceptable, but Pitt has done no worse than any other Minister who must provide for debts incurred in the prosecution of a lost war."

"I shouldn't care if Greville was not to be hit; but we've twenty windows at Edgware Row, and they'll cost a deal more in taxes, and if he keeps a saddle horse 'twill be at an added cost."

Sir William looked compassionately at her troubled face. "I must see how I can assist the dear fellow; perhaps you will both pay me a long visit, which would husband his resources. Whatever happens, Emma, I want you to feel you have a friend in me, and a home if any misfortune should separate you from Charles."

Emma was so overcome that she could only squeeze his hand. "I didn't mention this to distress you," said Sir William; "my idea was to ease your mind."

Often in the following months she gratefully recalled the conversation. The British Envoy's return to the Court of the Two Sicilies coincided with a change in the atmosphere at Edgware Row. Summer weather, Sir William Hamilton, and Greville's good humour, all went together. After his uncle's departure Greville spent more time at his apartments in the King's Mews than at Edgware Row; when at Paddington he was taciturn and demanded solitude to study documents and accounts. Banished from the library, Emma joined Mrs.

Cadogan in the parlour overlooking the stable yard; a dismal haven at the best of times, it drove her to despair on a wet autumn afternoon.

"I wish I knew what to do," she cried, struggling with intangible uneasiness. "I try to be cheerful, mild and affectionate; I never complained when little Emma was took from me and sent to Dunstable, nor did I utter a reproach to Greville for going without me to see the French balloon."

"Never mind, bach; Mr. Romney showed you Lunardi's at the Pantheon, and 'tis said to be the best."

"A balloon must be in the clouds to be worth seeing; but no disappointment would vex me if only Greville would be as he was."

"'Tis two and a half years since he took you to live with him," Mrs. Cadogan significantly observed.

"That makes no difference!"

"'Tis far longer than a kept girl can count on. Don't blind yourself, Emma, or the blow will be harder when it falls."

Springing to her feet, Emma paced distractedly up and down the small room. "Greville is not like other men, he could not act as they do. All will come right again in time, I know it will!"

Meanwhile her protector sat in his library before a glowing fire considering, without satisfaction, past events and future policy. Greville was seriously embarrassed. The sale of his town house had relieved, but not removed, anxiety; to free himself from pressing liabilities he must find two thousand pounds. Half the sum he expected to raise by selling his best pictures to the Duke of Rutland, a sacrifice that made him wince; the balance he hoped would be supplied by his bankers on Sir William's guarantee. His uncle's willingness to stand as surety was satisfactory so far as it went, but Greville had hoped for a Bond more far-reaching: nothing less than a signed declaration that the Right Honourable Sir William Hamilton, K.B., nominated the Honourable Charles Francis Greville as his heir. Opportunities for such a gesture had not been lacking, but the diplomat had returned to Naples uncommitted. Biting his lip, Greville contemplated a precarious future. What if Hamilton re-married? 'Twas not impossible. . . . Nor was he too old to father a brood of children. . . . The thought shot the young man from his chair to pace, like Emma, from wall to wall. A means must be discovered to keep the susceptible widower away from dangerous petticoats. . . .

Resolved upon action, Greville's temper mellowed; he again sought Emma's company and encouraged her to sew by the library fire while

he studied the contents of three boxes of minerals from Staffa. He was very open about his straitened circumstances, and flatteringly called for her opinion on economies. Wholehearted in endeavour, Emma advocated walling up the windows to evade the increased tax, dismissing her preceptors and discharging the servants. The first and last suggestions vetoed, Greville consented to save on Emma's education until he found himself "in an improving way".

Lesson-books were replaced by a day account-book in marbled binding inscribed: "Accounts of Emma Hart at Edgware Row." As Greville surmised, the task of recording every trifle resulted in substantial savings; after the first week no "Poor man" figured in the accounts submitted. December saw Molly Dring and Nelly Gray displaced by Molly Lunn and Ann Murphy, village girls of twelve and eleven whose united wages were to be four pounds a year. Satisfied that household expenses had been reduced to a minimum, Greville turned his mind to wider spheres. He gave good advice and made favour for his cousin, Charles Cathcart, returning to the East Indies as Quartermaster-General. He wrote a pleasantly discursive letter to Sir William answering one dispatched from Parma; he schemed for the development of the Pembrokeshire estate, and, when in town, did not neglect his friendship with Lord and Lady Middleton.

In the New Year Romney had the *Bacchante* ready. Writing to inform Sir William that the picture was being dispatched by the first ship sailing to Naples, Greville took the opportunity to expatiate on Emma:

"She certainly is much improved since she has been with me. She has none of the bad habits which giddiness & inexperience encouraged, & which bad choice of company introduced. She has much pride, & submits to solitude rather than admit of one improper acquaintance. She is naturally elegant, & fits herself easily to any situation, having quickness and sensibility. I am sure she is attached to me, or she would not have refused the offers, which I know have been great; & such is her spirit that, on the least slight or expression of my being tired or burthened by her, I am sure she would not only give up the connexion but would not even accept a farthing for future assistance.

This is another part of my situation. If I were independent, I should think so little of any other connexion that I never would marry. I have not an idea of it at present, but if any proper opportunity offer'd I

should be much harassed, not know how to manage, or how to fix Emma to her satisfaction, & to forego the reasonable plan which you & my friends have advised, is not right. I am not quite of an age to retire from bustle, & to retire to distress & poverty is worse. I can keep on here creditably this winter. . . .

After posting the letter Greville would have recalled his words. To an expert in buying and selling, such praise of Emma might read too much like an auctioneer's catalogue. . . .

Weeks passed and brought no word from his volatile kinsman. That others were less neglected was soon apparent—rumours of all kinds drifted round the town. Sir William was about to be married to an Austrian Countess of fabulous fortune. . . . He had taken a mistress who was old and ill tempered. . . . He was married to a young English governess and had already got her with child. . . .

Hoping to discover the truth, Greville repaired to General Conway as the most likely recipient of Sir William's confidences. No letters had come to Park Place, but the General had heard his old friend had the gout. . . .

Greville had much ado to remember he was a philosopher. From every direction he was harassed. Demands were made upon him for money, but none came in. The Duke of Rutland, enjoying the convivialities of his office as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, had moved no further in the matter of the pictures, neither did Messrs. Ross and Ogilvie evince any desire to be accommodating until they had in their possession Sir William's signature to the Bond.

In March Greville's brother-in-law, returned from a visit to Naples, denied the wild rumours circulating in London, but he prophesied a speedy wedding for the popular Envoy. "After being wed so long for money, Hamilton can now afford to marry for love," Sir Henry Harpur bluntly observed.

Under the combined attacks Greville's habitual phlegm gave way and he sat down again to write with more haste than discretion:

"You have not wrote to me this great while. They say here that you are in love. I know you love variety, & are a general flirt, & of the 60 English, what with widows & young married ladies, an amateur may be caught. Some have said you have had the gout. I say I neither know whether your heart or feet are lightest, but that I believe them both sound; & altho' Harry Harpur says he was witness to the deluge of blood of boars that flowed around you, I know that your heart is

neither calous to friendship nor to beauty. I hope I shall ever have the usual share of the one, & I shall as readily give up as much as you chuse to bestow on beauty. I do not consider them as incompatible guests in a good heart, & it must be a very interested friend indeed who does not sincerely wish everything that can give happiness to a friend. I sincerely wish that happiness to you. I am from frequent experience convinced that I can judge for you & you for me, at least suppose cases in which we should think alike, & on those cases in which comfort may arise you are more than myself able to realise suppositions by experiment; for the limited experiment I make I know to succeed, altho' from poverty it cannot last. If you did not chuse a wife, I wish the tea-maker of Edgware Row was yours, if I could without banishing myself from a visit to Naples. I do not know how to part with what I am not tired with. I do not know how to contrive to go on, & I give her every merit of prudence & moderation & affection. She shall never want, & if I decide sooner than I am forced to stop from necessity it will be that I may give her part of my pittance, & if I do so it must be by sudden resolution & by putting it out of her power to refuse it; for I know her disinterestedness to be such that she will rather encounter any difficulty than distress me. . . ."

Before the letter could reach Naples Greville received one from his uncle containing more concrete grounds for apprehension than was to be found in the rumours circulating among Sir William's friends.

"Lady Clarges I met with at Turin and Rome, and she is now at Naples. I like her much, and in one of my moments of admiration I said I wished she would take possession of my empty appartments. She gravely answered she was much flattered but had resolved never to marry again. The Devil fetch me if I meant to propose, tho' I have often thought she would suit me well. Her musical talents weigh greatly with me, as you may imagine, and she is gentle. . . ."

Greville's inclination was to write again forthwith, but he curbed his feelings and waited with what patience he could muster for Sir William to acknowledge and comment on his letter of March the 10th.

Ascribing her lover's harassed air to financial anxieties, Emma valiantly opposed a suggested resumption of her musical studies.

"Do I not play and sing well enough in a simple way to please you? "

"'Tis because your talents so much exceed the average that I wish to give you the advantages they deserve."

"But not now, Greville, when you're pressed for money. My voice can wait till fortune looks kind on you."

"Sweetheart, if ye became a fine singer it might be to my advantage."

"You mean I could earn money? Oh, Greville, if I thought I could do that I would practise morning, noon and night!"

Greville engaged Ferdinando Panormo, eldest son of Vincenzo Trusaino, to give Emma lessons twice a week. She was to learn a song in Italian "to surprise Sir William."

"But, Greville, Sir Will'um won't be back this great while, and it takes twice as long to master a song if one doesn't understand the words."

"Would you not like to accept the invitation to Naples?"

Emma rapturously clasped her hands as she cried excitedly: "Could we really go? 'Tis not to be believed that I could see Vesuvius, and Capri, and Sir Will'um's apartment of looking-glasses."

"The hospitality of Palazzo Sessa would save expenses here."

Sitting by the fire while March winds moaned round the house, Greville described the view from Virgil's tomb of Naples, sloping from Fort St. Elmo to Castel dell' Uovo; and beyond, across the eastern bay, to the Apennines, the Campagna Felice, Vesuvius and the Cape of Sorrentum. He referred again to Sir William's young days, when, as a Captain in the 3rd Regiment of the Footguards, he had been ardently in love with Lady Diana Spencer.

"If I were Sir Will'um I'd take my chance now."

"Dear girl, no ashes are so dead as those of an old passion." Greville's tone silenced Emma and rekindled misgiving. After an interval he continued as if in soliloquy: "'Tis more likely to be Anne Damer."

"I remember hearing of her husband," Emma eagerly announced. "John Damer it was, who, after supping with four girls of the town and a blind fiddler, shot himself at the 'Bedford Arms'!"

Rising to leave the room, Greville spoke coldly: "Events of that nature are always recalled."

Sir William did not hurry to answer Greville's letter; the response when it arrived was non-committal and unsatisfactory. The diplomat reiterated former expressions: "My dear Charles, you may command me at all times to give you the most convincing proofs of my friend-

ship and affection, if I have them not for you I am sure I have for nobody on earth." His references to Emma were casual—if she came and did the honours of his house he foresaw difficulties, though he did not deny that the pleasures of possessing so delightful an object under his roof would go far to compensate for embarrassments that might arise.

Greville prudently allowed several days to elapse before taking up his pen to reply. He spent the interval with Lord and Lady Stormont, who entertained at Wandsworth Hill Sir William's younger brother, Frederick, and his wife and daughter. Louisa Stormont was a charming hostess; on this occasion the visit was rendered additionally delightful by brilliant weather and the witchery of Elizabeth Hamilton's singing. Greville found it no easy task to inveigle his Uncle Fred to a private conversation; when chance favoured ingenuity, he was happy to learn that the Vicar of Wellingborough's views on the hazards of Sir William's re-marriage coincided with his own.

Greville left before the party broke up in order to dine at Lord Middleton's preparatory to accompanying the family to a reception given by Mrs. Vesey. Although Henrietta Willoughby had been presented in the winter, she was still shy, and clung childishly to Greville's arm as he escorted her into the crowded room. She wore a white dress of Chambéry gauze and red roses in her powdered hair. Was it chance, he wondered afterwards, that a rose had fallen from her bouquet into his hand? Limp, but still fragrant, it lay on his desk as he sat down to answer Sir William's letter:

"Your brother spoke openly to me, that he thought the wisest thing you could do would be to buy Love ready made, & that it was not from any interested wish, as he was perfectly satisfied with the fortune he had, that it was enough for his family, & that he should be very glad to hear you declare openly your successor, & particularly so if you named me; I write without affectation or disguise. If you find me either reserved or artful you may despise me; but in opening my heart & thoughts do not impute conceal'd designs. I wish you every happiness in this world & long life to enjoy it. I protest, I do not think the odds in our lives are proportioned to the difference of our years. You have spoken kindly of your intentions towards me, & you have shewn a readiness to assist me in every thing that I could in reason expect; I am very sensible and very grateful. . . . There is only one case in which I should wish to know your intentions & build upon

them, which is in case I ever should by any such declaration of yours obtain the consent of the relations of a lady whose fortune would enable us to live comfortably, &, by the future provision which after your death you should settle on us, insure a provision for children if any there should be.

In my present situation, suppose a lady of 30,000 was to marry me, the interest on her fortune would not provide equal to her pretensions & also provide a saving for a provision for children, jointure, &c.; &, having nothing to settle, how could I expect a prudent family to adopt me? On the other hand, if such a provision could be applied to our living & your goodness should insure me at a future period an estate which would come hereafter, there is no doubt but a lady with such a fortune might not reject me; therefore, I fairly own that the only supposition in which I should ever wish to have ye kind intentions you have made known to several of our friends made any ways certain, would be that it could be the means of my being married to a lady of at least £30,000. I would not wish to have your decision for a less ample fortune, because a less fortune would not at present enable me to live comfortably, & I never would permit your goodness be exhausted, which might be the case if you adopted me a beggar, & my principle is that you have not too much, that you have no reason to deprive yourself of any comfort of life, &, if you should shew me a preference which at one or another time you must shew to somebody, that you should not do it in a hurry; & the only case in which I could wish it to be fix't in my favor is that which will enable me while you live to prosper & appear in a line of life creditable & comfortable to myself, & that without any charge to you while you can enjoy your property, & that all my happiness should be owing to you would only add to my obligation to you, but not to the affection & regard which I now feel.

I shall only add to this long letter that taking E. is no part of the request, tho' it is not impossible I should soon put the question to a lady now totally inaccessible, whose fortune is what I mention; therefore I do not write idly."

After posting his letter at the office at Charing Cross, Greville proceeded to Paddington Green, where he found Emma and Mrs. Cadogan painting the coach-house. As he drove into the yard, Emma, on the topmost rung of a tall ladder, was applying a second coat to the ornamental barge-board.

"'Tis only Wednesday, and you said we wasn't to expect you before Friday; now you've come and found us at it, instead of the job finished to surprise you," she cried in disappointed tones.

"I'm glad I have done so, and saved you from breaking your neck; come down at once!"

"We started, and mean to finish; would you have your coach-house in two colours like Decker's balloon?"

"I would never have it red under any circumstances, and I order you down before further damage is done."

Standing under the ladder, Greville looked up at Emma, who peered between the rungs. "You said you wished you could afford to paint the place, and here we are doing it for a few shillings, yet you are not pleased."

"Emma, I have ordered you to cease!"

"And I tell you to go away! I'm not quitting a task I've put my hand to, no, not for anyone!" Taking the brush from the can, Emma gave it a flick from her wrist which sent a shower of paint over her protector. Immediately she was appalled by her action. Greville's face whitened and his mouth set; turning on his heel, he walked away.

When he was out of sight, Emma looked down at her mother, imperturbably painting the big double doors. "Mam, did you see what happened?"

"I'm neither short-sighted nor deaf, Emma!"

Lying flat against the ladder, Emma embraced it with her shapely arms. "Oh, God, I am miserable!" she moaned.

"And deserve to be! Your temper will be your undoing, gal. No sympathy must you expect from me, for I can't endure a fool!"

"But 'twas you, Mam, who suggested painting the house outside!"

"'Tis one thing to save a gentleman's pocket, quite another to be caught a-doing it—men like to pretend their women are cosseted and comfortable. You should have climbed down when Mr. Charles told you; the painting could wait till he went back to town."

"But he was angry about the painting."

"He was provoked to see you at it, because it put him out of conceit with himself," Mrs. Cadogan corrected.

Emma cleaned herself in the pantry before climbing upstairs to beg her lover's pardon. The bespattered clothes lay on the floor, but Greville had gone; running to the window, she was in time to see him stepping through the wicket gate.

A fortnight elapsed before he reappeared at Edgware Row. Emma,

distracted by anxiety, was only restrained by Mrs. Cadogan from going to see him at King's Mews.

"Do no more than get his clothes put to rights by the scourers," the astute woman advised.

He drove out unexpectedly on a hot Sunday afternoon, bringing with him Heneage Legge and the Honourable Wilbraham Tollemache, admirers of Emma's who, when they could escape from their wives, came to drink tea at Paddington Green. Relying on the restraint his friends imposed, Greville greeted his mistress as if they had parted lovingly on the previous day, and in this manner skilfully announced that his summer would be spent touring in a gig through Wales and Cornwall. "We set out for Denbigh immediately Robert's Waiting is over," he informed Heneage Legge, "which will be by the end of June unless His Majesty retains my brother beyond his time. Robert is a favourite at Windsor, thus an extension must be counted on."

Wilbraham Tollemache, sitting close to Emma, facetiously grasped her hand. "That will be our opportunity, darling Emma:

*'Thus uncontroll'd, in mutual bliss,
I rich in love's exhaustless mine,
Do thou snatch treasures from my lips,
And I'll take kingdoms back from thine!'*"

Drawing away, Emma turned and administered a sharp slap. "Have done!" she cried angrily.

Greville nodded approval. "Ye deserved it, Tollemache!" To Emma he said: "*A propos*, I met Dick Sheridan last night; he told me Jane Farmer is taking the Tickells' children to some bathing-place for six weeks, and suggested your joining them."

"'Twould be somewhere to go," she answered lethargically. A wave of unutterable depression obscured every horizon; the future was threatening and heavy as her own heart. . . .

The rift being repaired, Greville came and went as before and behaved with his usual kindness, but Emma walked in fear, ever fighting to maintain her spirits in face of a nameless dread.

Sir William Hamilton's impatiently awaited letter reached London in late June. After a long discourse on a tour to the lake of Celano in Abruzzo, he came to the subject important to his nephew:

"Was I to die this moment, my will, which I made in England and left with Hamilton of Lincoln's Inn, would show you are the person I

esteem most but I never meant to tell you so as the changes in this life are so various that no one can answer for himself from one moment to another—for example had I married Lady C. which might have happened, it must have been a cruel disappointment to you after having declared you my heir. I only made my will as everyone ought to do in case of accident, but as I have struggled through many difficulties in life and am now by Lady Hamilton's goodness secured from want, nay have enough to live comfortably should I be discharged from His Majesty's Service, I should not chuse to put anything out of my power—to be sure so far I am selfish & I have lived long enough to experience that most people are so but was it not for the thought of your profiting on my death (which according to the course of nature must happen before your moment arrives many years) I should not hesitate in selling the Welsh estate and purchasing an annuity for my life. Being a younger Brother myself & having made my own fortune & being at liberty to dispose of it as I please at my death when I can no longer enjoy it, I shall have a satisfaction in its going to a younger Brother whom I love and esteem more than any man on Earth. . . . As to E. was I in England and you was to bring your present plan to bear, and she would consent to put herself under my protection, I would take her most readily, for I really love her and think better of her than of anyone in her situation, but, my dear Charles, there is a great difference between her being with you or me, for she really loves you while she could only esteem and suffer me. I see so many difficulties in her coming here that I can never advise it. Though a great city, Naples has every defect of a province, and nothing you can do is secret. It would be fine fun for the young English travellers to cuckold the old gentleman, Signor Ambasciatore, and whether they succeeded or not would surely give me uneasiness. My regard for E. is such that if she leaves you and retires into the country, which I suppose she would do if you was to marry, I would willingly make her an allowance of £50 a year till your circumstances allowed you to provide better for her. I do assure you when I was in England, though her exquisite beauty had frequently its effects on me, it would never have come into my head to have purposed a freedom beyond an innocent kiss while she belonged to my friend, and I do assure you I should like better to live with you both here and see you happy than to have her all to myself, for I am sensible I am not a match for so much youth and beauty.

Now all is out I most sincerely wish you success in every plan that

can conduce to your happiness and I do truly believe my friendship for you is more sincere than most friendships are in this world. Adieu, my dear Charles——”

Relieved by his uncle's frankness and touched by his beneficence, Greville responded with equal candour:

“You judged me with generosity, & having already formed a plan uncommonly disinterested & affectionate, you communicate your present intentions before the time you intended, not to make me appear humiliated to my own eyes, but that it might be of use to me. That I may justify your good opinion, and prove that it was not a pretence which I assumed, I will mention to you more fully what before I only hinted at. My next door neighbour in Portman Square was Ld Middleton, of Nottinghamshire. I had the good fortune to please them, & have cultivated their friendship. There is one son & 2 daughters. The eldest married last year, the youngest presented only this winter. You know me sufficiently to know that beauty & disposition are both requisites, & the youngest in both respects is beyond the reasonable mark for a younger brother. I understood their fortunes to be 30, but since find the eldest had only 20,000. Such, however, to sensible people might be sufficient for the present, but it must be an impudent person who could propose it, being only possessed of an annuity of 500 a year, & some incumbrances. . . . I have already wrote to Ld. Middleton & communicated to him the letter you wrote. . . . Now let me say a few words about future plans & Emma.

If my letter should produce an offer for them, it is obvious we must part. If there should be no offer, I cannot go to a formal proposal; & I have fully stated that I *must* vary my plans, & reduce my establishment, which is beyond my means. I do not say one word of Emma; you know that, added to her looks, so cleanly & sweet a creature does not exist, & she is handsomer than when you saw her. . . . Give her one of your villas, or rather take a small retired house on the Hill at Naples, very small; she will not want to go about, & going to dine, or at any other hours, to your villa or house, when it may be convenient, will make a party of what by another plan would be daily habit; & you know well enough that with women, no matter what is done, a change is necessary, if it was only as a mark of attention. As to Englishmen, there is nothing to fear; left to herself she would conform to your ideas. She never has wished for an improper

acquaintance; she has dropped every one she thought I could except against, & those of her own choice have been in a line of prudence & plainness. . . . Let her learn music or drawing, or anything to keep in order, she will be as happy as if you gave her every change of dissipation. She is no fool, but there is a degree of nature in her, that she has the same pleasure in a retired & confined line as in a more extensive one. . . . She has natural gentility & quickness to suit herself to anything & takes easily any hint that is given with good humor, I believe she would die before she yielded to ill-treatment. If you could form a plan by which you could have a trial, & could invite her & tell her that I ought not to leave England, & that I cannot afford to go on, & state it as a kindness to me if she would accept your invitation, she would go with pleasure. She is to be 6 weeks at some bathing place; after a month's absence, & absence from me, she would consider the whole more calmly. If there was in the world a person she loved so well as yourself after me, I could not arrange with so much *sans froid*. . . ."

At Edgware Row the unsuspecting victim conscientiously took up carpets and shrouded furniture in dust-sheets preparatory to closing the house for the summer holidays. She was alone with her juvenile maid-servants, Mrs. Cadogan having set out in the Cardiff coach to stay at Cowbridge with Dr. Cadogan, to whom she referred as "my brother-in-law". The invitation had come as a boon to Greville, who had expenses enough with his own journey and Emma's accommodation at Brighthelmstone.

Richard Tickell had taken a small white-washed cottage on the shore, so secluded that Emma and Jane were able to bathe without the assistance of a woman and a horse and van. They had nothing to do all day but tend two tiny children; Jane found entertainment by pretending the shingle beach was the stage of Drury Lane Theatre, and herself the leading woman taking all the best parts; Emma had no such distraction, and sat moodily looking out to sea while her thoughts followed Greville. Sometimes she wondered how "little Emma" was faring at Dunstable, but interest in her child had abated since her instincts had been so firmly curbed. 'Twas best not to dwell on motherhood if one wished to copy Mrs. Wells. . . .

The Brighthelmstone holiday ended a fortnight before Greville's tour concluded. Mrs. Cadogan was the first to return, and Emma eagerly looked for her as the hackney-coach approached Edgware

Row. The house appeared strange and forbidding, with the outer door closed and the lower windows shuttered; chill misgiving caused her to over-pay her fare and run up the path without waiting for change. After prolonged knocking Molly Lunn opened the door on the chain and peered affrightedly through the gap.

Emma breathlessly demanded: "Where's Mrs. Cadogan?"

"Upstairs; she's got the palsy."

"Oh, my God!" Emma staggered and nearly fell. "Let me in, 'stead of staring as if you was magnetized!"

"I'm the only one here," Molly proudly announced. "Ann Murphy was frightened and ran home."

"Little coward," Emma responded as she posted upstairs.

Mrs. Cadogan, looking hot and uncomfortable in an untidy bed, welcomed her daughter with a crooked smile. "Struck in a thunder-storm near Chippenham," she mouthed.

"Mam! Weren't you inside the coach?"

"Sat in basket; cheaper," she explained as she fondled Emma's hand.

That night Emma wrote distractedly to Greville, directing her letter to the post office at Falmouth. She had talked with the young apothecary from Lisson Grove, who thought gravely of Mrs. Cadogan's condition, "and he says, dearest G. that if she has another fit she may die, for it is paralysis, she has, brought on by the thunder storm and the jolting of the coach." Mrs. Cadogan alone was unconcerned; she submitted to being blooded and to drinking steel water impregnated with fixed air; finally she contributed to her own cure by directing Emma to fetch a bunch of stinging nettles.

"But, Mam, we can't use a herb-woman's cure when we've got a real doctor."

The invalid wrote on a slate: "I MEAN TO GET WELL. GO AND GATHER THEM."

By the time Greville returned, external applications of nettles had restored Mrs. Cadogan's smile.

"Evidently it was not so severe an attack as we feared; but anything which the faculty style paralysis is alarming. Except that her expression is somewhat cynical, she appears much as usual."

"Greville, I was so alarmed and distressed; 'twouldn't have seemed so bad had you been here."

He responded soothingly: "You must persevere with the steel water which has had such beneficial results."

She dared not tell him that the doctor's draughts were emptied through the window. . . .

Emma could hardly cope with the work of the under-staffed house, and was thrown into confusion on Greville's announcing his intention of bringing Gavin Hamilton to dine at Paddington Green.

"But my cooking isn't good enough to please a great artist and a favoured friend of Sir Will'um's."

"Oysters, a boiled fowl and a jelly will suit his digestion, which is always out of order."

Gavin Hamilton had heard Emma praised by Sir William when that distinguished dilettante passed through Rome, but the description had not prepared him for her exquisite beauty. Out of politeness he tried to fix his gaze elsewhere, but Emma's lovely face was irresistible, and his eyes strayed against his will. His embarrassment amused Greville. "'Tis not possible to avoid staring at a Modern who has all the attributes of the Antique, and Emma is quite accustomed to *eloges*."

"I like to be told I'm a pretty woman," she confessed.

"You put me at my ease. 'Tis unnatural for an artist to pretend indifference to beauty. I've never seen in Great Britain features so perfect as yours, though some years ago in Rome I had a model who resembled you, save that her mouth was in no way so beautiful or uncommon."

At his request Emma performed some of her attitudes, posing in coloured lights reflected through sheets of glass manipulated by Greville.

"Quite unique," the artist commented in hushed tones.

Before driving back to town he pressed Emma to sit for him, declaring he would meditate on a subject offering scope for her remarkable talents; she answered that she had put him on her list of favourites, not only for his civility, but because he had the regard of her dear Sir Will'um.

Gavin Hamilton had hired an apartment in Davis Street, which he used more as a dealer's office for interviews with noble clients requiring antiquities to adorn mansions and pleasure-grounds than as a painting-room, which it purported to be. When Mrs. Cadogan was sufficiently recovered to act as duenna, Emma accepted his invitation to sit for a fancy picture, but lost her temper after making three successive journeys to town to find the artist too concerned with his health to brace himself to work.

"At four o'clock this morning, I was spitting blood," he announced portentously.

"You should drink cock-broth cooked in a pipkin with bloodwort-roots, oyster shells and burdock," said Mrs. Cadogan.

Nothing would induce Emma to go again. Greville's country engagements were taking toll of her temper. Hardly had he returned from Cornwall than he was called away to be Mayor of Warwick, and scarce had he appointed a deputy than he set out for Calke Abbey, Sir Henry Harpur's seat, separated by less than twenty miles from Wollaton Hall. Had Emma known that Lord Middleton and his family were at their Nottinghamshire home, her uneasiness would have increased.

Greville's cautious offer of himself as suitor for Henrietta's hand, had elicited an unexpected reply.

"Money," Lord Middleton observed, "weighed little against the value of a sincere attachment, but was that to be found where there was disparity in age and experience? The attractions of an unsophisticated girl might prove transitory to a man who was no stranger to love, and Henrietta was only eighteen with romantic ideals common to her age and sex. But if dear Charles was sure of his inclinations and felt able to win her heart, lack of fortune need form no obstacle. . . ."

Given *carte blanche*, Greville was at a loss how to act. Hitherto in affairs of the heart he had been content with the second hand, and half the wooing had been done by the fair object of his choice. From Calke he wrote to Sir William:

"I have no other alternative but to marry or remain a pauper; I shall persist in my resolution not to lose an opportunity if I can find it. . . ."

A week spent at Wollaton left him still uncertain of his prize. Henrietta was sweet and uniformly attentive, but could such conduct be construed into dawning passion? . . .

On reaching town he considered how best to break the bonds that had grown irksome. Emma followed her warm greeting by wistfully inquiring if he purported staying over Christmas. In six months he had spent no more than a fortnight with her:

"And you can't think how tedious does the time pass when I'm away from you!"

"I can promise to be here into the New Year. In March," he said firmly, "ye must prepare for a long parting, as business will oblige me to reside some months in Scotland."

"Oh, Greville!" Tears came into her eyes and spangled her lashes. "Such a long while will be like total separation; I shall be wretched, and 'twill all be waste time, as I shall neither profit from your conversation nor improve in any degree. I wish Sir Will'um was nearer, then I should ask to be his guest, for after you there is no one I could be so happy with."

Greville seized his advantage: "I should have no objection to your going to Naples for six or eight months if you really wish it."

"When I dwelt on any chances that might separate us, I was comforted by remembering Sir Will'um's offer to befriend me."

"Then, dear girl, if you'll be happy with him, you must write a letter for me to forward with my own."

"But couldn't I go and keep house for you in Scotland?"

"Impossible! My object is a scientific tour of the West Coast to study the strata and the various operations of Nature. I shall also take the opportunity of visiting friends; this I must do or lose my connexion with the world."

Emma began to cry in earnest. "Tell Sir Will'um I'll not be a trouble," she sobbed; "he needn't take more notice of me than is convenient. If I can learn music and Italian I'll contrive to be contented till you come to fetch me."

A week later Greville announced he had the refusal of two seats in Dejean's diligence setting out for Geneva at the beginning of March. "Then you will go in a two-wheeled chaise to Rome, unless Sir William makes other arrangements."

"But the expense, Greville!"

"Thirty guineas," he grimly answered.

"Can you afford so much?"

"I cannot—unless Sir William comes to my aid."

After Emma was in bed Greville sat down to write to his fellow conspirator:

"I do not see why you should not find some reward for your generosity when I no longer can continue my connexion from the state of my finances. I hope I shall be the more able to do something for her, & believe me, if either by marriage or office I shall become more at my ease, my first concern shall be to provide for her, whether she

is with you or not. You need not fear domestic duty, women always require what men give them reason to expect, & very often they take omission of duty as proof of inconstancy, or of neglect, or diminution of affection, & therefore resent it. She has a good constitution, yet is delicate, & I think that her looks improved as well as her health since I considered myself an overmatch for her, & as I consider you as my heir-aparent I must add that she is the only woman I ever slept with without having ever had any of my senses offended, & a cleaner, sweeter bedfellow does not exist. . . .”

When his long letter was finished, Greville unfolded the note entrusted to him by Emma:

“My dear Sir William, emboldened by your kindness to me when you was in England, I have a proposal to make that I flatter myself will not be disagreeable to you. Greville (whom you know I love tenderly) is obliged to go for four or five months in the summer to places that I cannot with propriety attend him to, & I have too great a regard for him to hinder him from pursuing those plans which I think it is right for him to follow; & I know it is necessary for him to keep up his connexions in the world;—and as you was so good as to give me encouragement, I will speak my mind. In the first place, I should be glad if I was a little more improved than what I am, and as Greville is obliged to be absent in the summer he has out of kindness to me offer'd, if you are agreeable, for me to go to Naples for 6 or 8 months, and he will at the end of that time fetch me home, and stay a while when he comes, which I know you will be glad to see him.”

Having got thus far, Greville gave an exasperated sigh; quickly he scanned the remaining lines, then re-read the only important sentence:

“. . . If you will allot me an apartment in your house that I might be under your protection while I am there, and lett Greville occupy those apartments when he comes, you know that *must* be. . . .”

Fingering the double sheet of paper, Greville meditated whether to destroy the letter or to enclose it in his own. Finally he decided to let it go—it would be understood. Hamilton himself had said: “You and I have long laid aside all compliments, and I believe understand one another well.”

Emma did her best to forget approaching exile in the weeks of happiness that intervened. Greville was kind and attentive beyond his wont, and spent more time at Paddington Green than at his official residence in the Royal Mews. Each day was so precious that Emma would have held it fast; relentlessly the weeks slipped one into another until only the short month of February remained. Cold, wet weather kept the lovers indoors and held visitors at bay; Henry Willoughby alone braved the mud of Edgware Road, arriving mired and dripping, to Emma's annoyance and Greville's consternation. 'Twas like the young fool to come pestering Emma to accept his proposals and settlements, when a thoughtless word might upset careful scheming. . . .

Her trunk had gone by sea and all arrangements were made for setting out on the 1st of March, when Gavin Hamilton decided to return to Rome and volunteered to act as escort. It meant postponing their departure for a fortnight, and on this account the new arrangement was agreeable to Emma. The artist was given thirty guineas from the fifty pounds provided by Sir William; the remainder Emma sewed up in her stays. The house was dismantled, save for two rooms kept habitable for Greville if he chanced to require them; the sale of a statue and some pictures had cleared off all household debts. Everything was ready, the atmosphere vibrant with impending change: " 'Tis like watching a ship alert to take the water before the dog-shores are struck away," said Greville, translating his own feelings. To Emma the delay was a reprieve; all too quickly she had again to face calamity. Farewells had to be said once more to Mr. Romney and Jane Farmer; Mrs. Cadogan made another woodcock pie and roasted a fresh brace of partridges, provisions for the journey to Calais.

The Dover coach left the 'Swan with Two Necks' at four o'clock in the morning, and a hackney-coach, to convey the travellers and their packages from Edgware Row, was ordered for half-past one. Soon after dinner Greville prevailed upon Emma to go to bed, promising to come up himself after taking tea. Too excited and weary for sleep, she lay watchful in the flickering firelight, a prey to sorrow and foreboding.

Was it true she embarked upon the hazardous journey merely to ease Greville's pocket and free him to visit friends in Scottish castles? . . . When had she ever kept him from his friends? . . . The fifty pounds from Sir Will^{um} would have gone a great way towards house-

keeping. . . . Had Greville made an offer for Henrietta Willoughby? . . . By declaring so, Henry Willoughby had destroyed her peace of mind. . . . Good God, suppose it was true! . . . Suppose it was *true*! . . . Oh, please, please God, *make* it that it *can't* be true. . . . No, she would not believe it. . . . Greville couldn't so deceive her. . . . And Sir Will'um—he would never act so treacherous. . . . Wicked she was to doubt. . . .

Restored to a measure of peace, she lay listening to the rain dashing against the window-panes. It was a wild night, with storm-clouds scudding across the sky. Now and again the wind caught the alarm bell on the side of the house, causing it to ring eerily.

Presently Greville came quietly upstairs; he opened and closed the door cautiously and crossed to the bed. "Not asleep, Emma?"

Tossing back the clothes, she grasped his hand and laid her cheek against it. "I can sleep when I'm far away from you, but not now when every moment is precious. I feel like a person condemned to the scaffold; after to-morrow Emma will be dead."

He looked away from her as he answered uneasily: "Nonsense, my dear; you'll be so happy with Sir William that I shall be cut out!"

She looked up suspiciously. "If you do not come for me when you promised, or neglect me, I shall certainly be grateful to Sir Will'um!"

A burning lump of coal fell with a clatter into the fender, affording Greville an excuse to release himself. Emma sat up in bed, watching his face with the fierce red light throbbing on it.

"Oh, Greville," she cried, "you couldn't break your promise to fetch me in the autumn, could you?"

"Emma, Emma! In your heart you cannot reproach me with ever acting otherwise than a kind, attentive friend, so do not talk yourself out of the true view of your situation."

"I won't—truly I won't. But I'm anxious, so frightened for the future. . . ."

"My dear, you're over-wrought—you should try to rest."

"Then come and lie beside me."

With the firelight playing upon him, he took off his coat, waistcoat and cravat. Emma watched yearningly, a catch at her heart. How handsome he was! . . .

Presently he flung himself half dressed upon the bed. "You'll be chilled," she whispered; "why do you lie outside?"

"I'm quite warm, and in an hour or so we must be up."

Stretching out her arms, she drew his head to her breast and pressed her lips to his temple. "Oh, God, how I love you!" she moaned.

From the fireplace came tiny hissing explosions from hailstones hurtling down the chimney. A pulsing red glow illuminated the familiar room, showing birds embroidered on the bed hangings; a portrait of King Charles II drawn by Paton in plumbago; a swans-down puff hanging on a ribbon above the powdering stand, a mirror in a walnut frame carved into the gilded arms of Brooke and Warwick and the motto: *Vix Ea Nostra Voco*.

Greville stirred in her arms, muttering: "I would my mind were not at war with prudence."

"Are you sorry I'm going?" she wistfully asked.

"Aye—I'm sorry."

Presently the room became darker, veiling their sleeping faces with kindly shadows.

Book Two

{APRIL 1786-JUNE 1800}



CHAPTER ONE

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S *palazzo* stood on the western slope of the Pizzofalcone, mid-way between the massive fortress of Sant' Elmo, grimly uprising against the sky, and the Castel dell' Uovo, a confused pile of ancient buildings and modern batteries built on the little island that formed the tip of "the Falcon's Beak." The rocky promontory, jutting from the hill of Sant' Elmo, divided the bay into two semi-circles and formed a barrier between Old Naples and the suburb of Chiaia. The British Envoy's situation gave him no small satisfaction. Since Masaniello's Rebellion in 1647 it had been a Government policy to secure the city from sudden insurrection by maintaining a strong foreign garrison in the fortified castle that dominated every approach. "Living under the guns of Sant' Elmo affords me a comfortable sense of security," Sir William frequently remarked. "Though the people are devoted to '*Re Lazzaroni*,' as they very properly call him, there is no reliance to be placed on their affections, which are fickle as their passions are ill regulated."

Palazzo Sessa, at the top of Vico Santa Maria a Cappella Vecchia, commanded an extensive view. From her balcony Emma gazed across the bay to Capri and the mountains beyond Sorrento. To the east Vesuvius rose in desolate splendour from the rich plains behind Portici; westward the shore gently curved to the grotto of Posilipo and the vineyards leading to Puzzuoli and the coast of Baiæ.

The Legation was separated from the *vico* by a spacious courtyard, which, in spite of a surrounding wall, appeared public property. It was the hour of the *siesta*, and those who desired had lain down in the shade of cedrati and Judas trees growing from circlets of earth in the pavement. Traders had brought their wares with them for safety. An *acquaajuolo*, dressed in a torn shirt and ragged red breeches, slept with his dirty arms embracing a basket of lemons and an earthenware water-jar; a shawled crone, her head nodding over claw-like

hands, roused herself to disturb the myriad flies creeping over her stock of bletted medlars. Filthy, semi-naked *lazzaroni* sprawled in every attitude of negligent ease or squatted lazily searching the heads of their friends.

The chaise in which Emma and her mother had travelled from Switzerland stood at the steps of the vestibule while the *vetturino* received hospitality indoors dispensed by Vincenzo, Sir William's *valet de chambre*, who had met Dejean's diligence at Geneva. Harnessed three abreast, the horses which had brought the carriage one and a half posts from Aversa, in gruelling noonday heat, hung their heads dejectedly, their sides lathered with foam.

Emma was disturbed, feeling their sufferings as her own. Quitting the balcony, she hastened to the bedroom where Mrs. Cadogan, by signs and a staccato mixture of Welsh and English, instructed an Italian maidservant how to unpack the big trunk that had come by sea. At sight of Emma, with the blue scarf she had worn on the journey still swathing her head, the girl fell upon her knees.

"*La Santa Vergine!*" she cried.

Bending down, Emma briskly shook the worshipper. "Have done, do! I'm the same as yourself but maybe Providence has been more kindly to me."

"She can't understand a word," Mrs. Cadogan interrupted; "these foreigners are all alike, never trouble themselves to learn a civilized tongue. 'Twill mean studying Italian if we want to get anything done."

"What will I do to explain that the post-horses are parched for a drink and are left cruelly in the broiling sun?"

"Best go to Sir Will'um; though mind you, bach, you're doomed to woe if you're going to trouble about dumb beasts in this country."

The Minister said the same when Emma at length discovered him in his new apartment on the second floor.

"My poor Em, you must harden your heart, for there are no people more callous than the Neapolitans! When I came here twenty-two years ago I confess to some qualms over the treatment of animals, but since then my heart has grown tough, and believing the Almighty has prepared a heaven for His beasts, think the kindest act I can perform is to dispatch them there before they suffer too much from the brutality of man!" Despite his ruthless creed, Sir William clapped his hands and soundly rated the footman who answered the summons.

"Though I've made myself quite hot over the matter, I doubt if your post-horses find themselves better off for our exertions. That lackey, who is a *castrato*, and therefore a fool, will forget all he was told before reaching the kitchens."

"Then I'll go with him!" cried Emma, turning about.

Sir William laid a restraining hand upon her arm, looking into her face as he did so. "Ye must learn to 'rest aisy,' as the Irish say."

The expression in his eyes had far from a quietening effect; Emma knew only too well the meaning of the fatuous, glassy stare. With a gesture he invited her to sit in one of the fashionable painted chairs which Greville had sent, on request, from London. She complied reluctantly, anxious to postpone conversation until she had considered a plan of conduct. Was it accident or design that she faced the brilliant sunlight and also was reflected in the mirrored wall? . . .

"And how did ye leave Charles? I suppose his plans for retrenchment were settled? He's a methodical economist; the devil knows where he learnt it, systematic prudence not being a virtue in our family."

Emma forgot misgivings in eagerness to forward her lover's interests.

"If he is able he's going to study the coast as far as Cape Wrath; 'tis easier to manage cheap in Scotland, it being the custom to live on porridge. But I hope Greville will not follow Scottish ways too close, for his digestion is weak and he's soon out of order."

Sir William's lips twitched. "I shouldn't trouble unduly, Emma!"

"I can't help it—I worry all the time and regret the expense I put him to. If he doesn't get office I don't know how he is to manage; for he has no prospects to count on!"

"If I tell you a secret, will you speak of it to no one but Charles?"

"Indeed I'll not tell a soul!"

"Then to make ye happy I'll confide that I made a Will when I was in England appointing Charles my heir."

Emma jumped up, her face aglow, her hands outstretched in eagerness. "Oh, Sir Will'um, you are good!"

"Sometimes I think I am, because did I not love Charles more than any man on earth, I should not hesitate in selling my Welsh estate and purchasing an annuity on my life, which would greatly increase my income."

Sir William took Emma's hands and gently pulled her towards his knee; she looked down upon him, doubtful how to act. To express

gratitude and regard and yet repel his intention was a problem to tax ingenuity. Tears unexpectedly came to her aid. "Indeed I am sorry," she said through sobs, "but I cannot help it, I am so low-spirited. This is my birthday, the day on which Greville used to stay at home and be especially kind, and now to be such a great way off is more than I can bear. But for his promise to fetch me in September or October I could not endure the separation!"

Emma had released herself and, with her face buried in her arms, leant against the window-frame, and thus did not observe the wry look on Sir William's face. He sat watching, gently swinging a gold quizzing-glass on a black watered ribbon. His naturally dark complexion was burnt brown as any *lazzarone*. He wore a grey morning suit of fine merino, the coat embroidered with the star of the Order of the Bath, his cravat and ruffles were of French cambric, and his shoe- and knee-buckles of damaskeened steel; everything was of the best and worn with an air.

As Emma's tears showed no abatement, Sir William rose and approached with a look of whimsical compassion. "*Pazienza!* My poor Emma; years pass seemingly in an instant; why, then, be afraid of a few months? Besides, I flatter myself that before the end of the summer your ideas will have changed and you will have realized, as I do, that life is but the moment—the present moment."

Keeping her face averted, Emma extended her hand and gratefully returned the pressure of Sir William's fingers. "I'll be better soon," she gasped. "God knows I have every reason to be agreeable and cheerful, for kinder you couldn't be."

Giving her a consoling pat, he left her and crossed the room to his desk, which she heard him unlock. Staring into the courtyard, she saw the post-horses still untended, their heads drooped more dejectedly, their resignation was more pronounced.

The old *merciaiuolo* had solved the problem of keeping her merchandise in condition by covering the medlars with her red headcloth, thereby transferring the swarm of flies to her oily dirty locks; the *acquauiolo*, rearranging scanty garments after making a convenience of the Embassy wall, sauntered back to his water-jar and lemons. Emma's eyes travelled to the sparkling bay, dotted with strange craft carrying lateen sails of scarlet, brown, yellow and blue.

Sir William returned with a handful of bijoutry. "Look, Emma! Is there anything here you'd like? This tortoise-shell fan is the first thing Lady Hamilton bought in Naples, and I believe it has lain

in the box ever since. Poor soul! she was not fond of gaiety, and preferred to sit reading the Testament to attending Court functions."

"Oh, 'tis beautiful! But can you mean it for me?" The shell, as the ribs unfurled, rustled coldly.

"And here's a turquoise necklace with a pair of earrings mounted in Welsh gold. My wife wore these as a girl, and some of the stones are off colour." The poor little trinkets lay in a home-made casket covered in faded pink brocade; frequent handling had perished the ribbon hinges, and the bead clasps broke in Emma's hand. With the jewellery lay a withered spray of jasmine; Sir William was momentarily confounded. "That must be the piece I broke off at Laurency, the night I made my proposal." He crushed it in his hand and flung the bits through the window. Thrusting the casket and a tangle of brooches and chains upon Emma, he said boisterously: "There, take the lot, my dear; I don't want to see 'em again—better they should be used."

While Emma disentangled her new possessions, Sir William walked up and down, whistling a jaunty tune. Behind him the mirrored wall reflected Naples bay and bright criss-cross sails gliding like brilliant birds.

"I shall tell Greville about these lovely presents—does the post go soon?"

"Not until the 1st of May; that will give ye time to settle down before writing."

"He will be wondering how far I have got, for we came a deal quicker than was expected." She wistfully added: "I wish there had been a letter waiting for me—but I suppose I couldn't expect it."

The sound of a gong rumbling through the *palazzo* warned Sir William that they must dress for dinner and the promenade in Villa Reale—"Where you will see only the aristocracy, people of the lesser sort being excluded except on the *festa* of Piedigrotta when the gardens are thrown open."

As the evening was hot, Emma decided to wear her best sprigged muslin from last summer and a shady hat that was renovated before she left Paddington. A pair of new shoes and lavender gloves imparted fresh elegance; she was in two minds whether to wear her hair up or down, until Sir William settled the matter by pulling out the pins. He looked at her with a strange expression, a blending of desire and reverence. Suddenly he took her hand and kissed it. "Poor Emma!" he said compassionately.

The Villa Reale formed a long, narrow strip separated from the Chiaia by an iron railing and from the sea by a parapet. The gardens were laid out in the Italian style: clipped hedges, cypresses, acacias and evergreen oaks bordered five long avenues ornamented by statues from Herculaneum and Pompeii. As yet the trees were insufficiently grown to afford complete seclusion, and the wise shunned the outer path where *lazzaroni*, peering through the railings, cheerfully grimaced and spat lupin seeds at their betters.

Emma and Sir William, sauntering beside the parapet, paused at a balcony overhanging the beach to watch some fishermen unloading *calamaretto* from a brightly painted green boat. Each squid had been deprived of eyes and bitten in the heart by the gleaming teeth of the captor, but as they were flung upon the sand, the slender black tentacles still writhed.

"Whatever will they do with such horrid monsters?" Emma inquired.

"Sell them in the market for a good price—'tis possible we may have one served up for to-morrow's dinner; you'll find it a most excellent dish."

"My God! I'd sooner eat a serpent!"

Sir William chuckled, watching Emma's lovely, horrified face. "Wait till you see cuttle-fish hanging from poles along the quay at Santa Lucia!"

"Greville told me there was vipers, but he said naught of such nightmares!"

"Yet he thought *calamaro* the best of Neapolitan fish—do ye think of Charles all the time?"

"All the time," she answered.

Emma only maintained cheerfulness by pretending that Greville was beside her, an invisible companion who shared her experiences and saw the scenes that charmed her eyes. Had he not always said Naples Bay was the most beautiful sight in the world? . . . And indeed 'twould be strange if heaven could offer anything better. . . . With eyes blue as the sky overhead, Emma gazed over the sapphire sea to dim capes and shadowy islands; she followed the flight of gulls swooping and planing above bright-sailed fishing-boats; she looked at the grim towers of Castel dell' Uovo duplicated in reverse by the glassy water.

Sir William's shapely brown hand crept along the balustrade until it covered Emma's fair one. "My dear, divert yourself with what is

at hand. My study of antiquities has kept me in constant thought of the perpetual fluctuation of everything. The whole art is, really, to live all the *days* of our life; and not, with anxious care, disturb the sweetest hour that life affords, which is this!"

Stung to remorse, Emma cried: "Oh, Sir Will'um, I will be happy, *I will!*"

From the bay sounded the splash of oars; a lonely cry of a gull; the voice of a fisherman singing:

*"Non voglio cosa, ch'egge da morire;
Voglio schitto vedere ss'uocchie tueje,
Chiss' uocchie belle, ss'uocchie farcone,
Ch' anno chest'alma mia posta mpresone."*

The song, the romantic surroundings and close proximity to a beautiful woman, awakened a ready response in the youthful heart of the elderly Minister. "My dear, try to love me," he pleaded unsteadily.

Urged by his hand, Emma walked beside him towards the centre of the Villa, where the orchestra from San Carlo played during the evening promenade. Sir William's impassioned air rendered her increasingly uneasy. If he displayed so much emotion at the beginning, how could a safe course be steered through the long hot days of summer? . . .

As they walked towards the declining sun, Emma had an excuse to hide her face with the bent brim of her hat; she could no longer see Sir William, the bay or the cliffs of Piedigrotta, but she had an oblique view of hills dotted with white villas, rising behind the palaces on the Chiaia.

They began to overtake other strolling couples, fine ladies and *cavalieri serventi* proceeding to *Piazzetta del Toro*, to take part in the fashionable circuit past Queen Caroline's marble seat near the Farnese Bull.

Contrary to his nephew's policy "not to offend against *bienséance*", Sir William introduced La Signora Hart to everyone who paused to speak. Emma's ignorance of Italian did not prevent her following the trend of conversation, for she heard Greville's name and the word *protettore*, which too closely resembled the English equivalent to be misconstrued. At first she blushed and hung her head, but took courage on remarking no change in benevolent glances.

On passing from one group to another, Sir William patted the hand that rested on his arm: "My sweet Em, to be a lover is not

considered a sin in this domain, where the *cavaliere servente* is privileged to pay a wife's bills in return for favours unspecified."

Emma became acquainted with the Duc de Saint Maître, who could speak sufficient English to voice envy of His Excellency's happiness in entertaining such incomparable beauty beneath his roof. Accepting the tribute graciously, she allowed the Duke to kiss her hand, "for it seems to mean very little," she confided to Sir William, "yet it flatters one up."

Through a gap in the crowd she saw the Queen, wearing a yellow satin gown over a white spangled petticoat; her head was dressed high and ornamented with pearls and three ostrich plumes that nodded as she kept time to music from *La Serva Padrona*.

The Queen of Naples had a fine neck and bosom, pretty feet and shapely hands and arms that she displayed to advantage. She made great play with a snuff-box and handkerchief, then with her fan and a music score unrolled for her perusal by Count Dietrichstein. She had good eyes, but the skin beneath was puffy; her nose was over-long and her mouth too pursed and short in the upper lip properly to balance the length of her oval face. Determination and intelligence distinguished her features, rather than beauty; her expression was not lacking in sensuality and gracious charm. Maria Carolina was enjoying the triumphs of a ruling woman. Long years of scheming to free the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies from dependence on Madrid had been brought to maturity by the able leadership of General Acton. The army, which, in consequence of Marchese Tanucci's policy, had dwindled to fourteen thousand soldiers, was restored to a force of thirty thousand infantry and cavalry; a navy had been created. In the spring of the previous year Maria Carolina and King Ferdinando had set forth in the superb new flag-ship, leading twelve warships, on a voyage of ceremonious visits to the ruling princes of Italy, excluding the sovereign of the State of Rome, with whom they were at enmity. The tour lasted four months and cost a million ducats; money well spent, for it established the splendour and independence of the Kingdom and showed Carlos III of Spain that he could no longer treat his son's dominion as a vassal state. The Queen's satisfaction and gratitude to the French-born English Minister, whose genius had brought liberation, were testified by deference to General John Acton, standing at her elbow amid a group of Neapolitan courtiers.

Keeping on the outskirts of the fashionable throng, Sir William again piloted Emma to the sea-girt path.

"Well, what did ye think of the Queen?" he asked.

"She's beautifull!" Emma responded, all her love of pomp and majesty reflected by her voice. "I never hoped to see royalty at close quarters, nor expected that one so great would act simple as an ordinary woman."

"Yet she is proud and believes her race is destined to rule; she inherits Maria Theresa's zest for enlightened government and the welfare of the people. By assisting Dominico Cirillo, Mario Pagano and Gaetano Filangieri, Caroline shows herself actuated by a real spirit of reform."

"Doesn't the King take any part?"

"Ferdinand's passions are swallowed up in his rage for the pleasures of hunting, shooting and fishing; he shares none of the Austrian Hapsburgs' enthusiasm for high-handed well-doing, and is supremely contented to be a Pulcinella king of the *lazzaroni*."

Sir William's manner implied that his assessment of the royal pair did not exclusively occupy his thoughts. Whenever Emma caught his eye she detected excitement and the amorous fixity she knew only too well. . . .

Having reached the end of the Villa, the Ambassador turned to come back by a more secluded path, to find himself confronted by a handsome elderly man walking beside an emaciated invalid wheeled along by an Indian servant.

"Well met, Rumbold!" cried Sir William, with exaggerated enthusiasm. "And how are ye, Richard? Dr. Nudi told me he hoped great things from a new treatment."

"It hasn't made much difference yet, Sir," responded the young man in a whistling, hoarse voice.

Richard Rumbold was a lieutenant in the first Regiment of Guards; his scarlet coat and white buckskin breeches hung loosely upon his gaunt body. His desperate eyes, sunk deep in bony sockets, fastened eagerly upon Emma's face, and when she gave her hand, he took it between damp palms and pressed it so that his knuckles stood out.

"Richard is easily overcome," Sir Thomas Rumbold said in extenuation of his son's behaviour; "and by God, Madam, only a man calous to beauty could gaze on you unmoved."

Emma curtsied. "Your praise makes me happy, Sir!"

"Shall we invite Sir Thomas and Mr. Rumbold to a display of your attitudes, Emma?" Without awaiting an answer, the Minister turned to his friend: "Mrs. Hart recaptures scenes from antiquity, imper-

sonating the characters with no apparatus but a shawl and carefully arranged lights."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, I'd be happy to oblige, but my camel-shawl was so tattered that Greville said 'twas not fit to bring!"

"I can replace it the moment we get home."

"Then I'll perform all my little acts whenever you please; and I do a new one you never saw, of Deianira, who accidentally killed Hercules, who was her husband, by giving him a poisoned garment to wear. 'Tis the saddest thing, for when she sees what she has done she hangs herself."

"Then we'll have it this night after darkness falls."

Richard Rumbold's eager agreement was stifled by his malady; the cough that racked his bony frame had an internal echo like the crowing of a cock, a grimly hilarious sound that rang mockingly across the fragrant garden. While the Indian servant supported him, Sir Thomas Rumbold said in an undertone: "Dick is now in so bad a way that Nudi has forbidden him to be out after sundown, and indeed when I see him each day a little worse, I'm doubtful if he'll live to reach England."

"How soon do ye intend setting forth?"

"About a fortnight hence, when Lady Rumbold has had a good taste of society in Rome. It appears that, despite infirmities, Lord Northington exerted himself to conduct the party to all the sights of Holy Week, one being Willett Payne masquerading as a Franciscan outside the 'Trinità,' where he collected ten *pulios*, which he solemnly presented to Cardinal de Bernis for the pilgrims."

Sir William chuckled. "The rascal would make a convincing mendicant friar, with his black eyes and dark skin; but had he been discovered, he'd have found himself in a nasty scrape. No thought of danger curbs Jack Payne's zest for a frolic; do ye recall him, Emma? The little sea officer with Hugh Conway when their carriage nearly overturned in Lombard Street?"

"I remember him," she answered. Indeed it seemed that his shadow crossed whatever path she took, a shadow that menaced, whereas its prototype had been kindly and gay. Suddenly her thoughts veered; she'd give a lot to know that little Emy was happy. . . .

The sun, sinking behind Posilipo, cast a rosy glow upon the escarpments of Castel Sant' Elmo and the terraced buildings of the Carthusian Convent crowning the lofty eminence that dominated Naples and the suburb of Chiaia. The sky was a flood of gold and

salmon pink, shading to soft blue over Vesuvius, a serene background for a column of grey smoke and a tongue of flame issuing from the crater.

Urged by Sir Thomas, the Indian servant trundled the invalid at a rattling pace towards the gates. The rapid jerky motion had a distressing effect, countered to some extent by Richard Rumbold's determination to talk with Emma, who ran compassionately beside his chair.

"Though I seem in a bad way, Madam, I vow I'm getting better," he gasped. "'Tis the climate of Europe; it doesn't agree with my constitution. Now, if I could get back to Madras, by Gad, Madam, I'd be a new man."

"My son has never recovered from the hardships he suffered at the siege of Pondicherry," Sir Thomas dourly supplemented, "and it was for nothing, our pusillanimous politicians having ceded the territory back to the French."

"Soldiers spill their blood that statesmen may play at bagatelle; I discovered that very early in my military career," said Sir William.

"I forgot ye'd held a commission!"

"Eleven years in the 31d Guards. As an Ensign I had the advantage of serving in Holland under the Duke of Cumberland, and for five years I was equerry to my foster-brother when he was Prince of Wales; yet I never felt myself cut out for a man of arms."

"Unlike Richard!" said the disconsolate father.

"Aye, poor Dick!" The robust, elderly men looked compassionately at the young, emaciated form, whose shoulder blades rose in sharp ridges under his martial red coat.

Sir Thomas Rumbold had engaged all the accommodations at the 'Crocelle Inn,' but although the Via Chiatamone was within a stone's throw of Villa Reale, his curricie waited outside the garden. Painted black and emblazoned with arms, the handsome vehicle was drawn by a pair of shining silver-white horses in red harness. Turbaned Indian servants stood on a platform behind the hood; the turnout was completed by four running footmen carrying white wands and cut lemons.

Emma and Sir William waited while Richard Rumbold was lifted from his chair to the cushioned seat of the carriage. His eyes were closed and his pinched face looked blue and unearthly. As the wheels began to turn, his heavy lids opened and he smiled wanly at Emma. Fervently she blew a kiss: "Oh, the poor, poor creature!"

"Alas, youth will struggle with death, and all the gold of the Indies cannot weigh the balance against the great enemy."

"Is Sir Thomas very rich?"

"He is said to have accumulated a vast fortune during the time he was Governor of Madras. 'Tis the fashion to say he started life as a waiter at 'White's', but in truth he was educated for the East India Company's service, and was a wealthy man when little past thirty."

After watching the curricule slowly following in the wake of the footmen who cleared a passage, Emma and Sir William turned to climb the hill to the British Legation. Darkness descended with almost tropical suddenness; only the turrets of Castel dell' Uovo faintly reflected the sunset that had blazed behind Posilipo. Deeper and deeper blue suffused the sky, buildings stood forth stark and blanched, gaining false significance from the rarefied azure light.

Neapolitans embarked on the pleasures of evening; vendors' stalls stood along the edges of the lava pavements; an elocutionist in a scarlet toga thundered Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*; Pulcinella squeaked and jabbered from his elevated stage; an old woman screamed a hymn as penance; lottery tipsters shouted for clients. Sloe-eyed girls dressed in cotton chemises and bright skirts turned their spindles as they walked; ragged young fishermen swaggered with red geraniums behind their ears; *lazzaroni*, beggars, goats, children, and dogs surged in aimless procession. Purposefully, like strong currents through a restless sea, came priests in black surtouts, fat Dominicans tripping in neat leather slippers, bearded Franciscans carrying white begging bags; prostitutes wearing fixed smiles on lips dyed with Spanish wool.

"Well, what do you think of Naples?" Sir William complacently demanded.

"'Tis all gay and heedless—something like a summer evening in Covent Garden when gentlemen quit the taverns and playhouse women loiter under the piazzas."

"You're right, Em; the same spirit dominates both. But here Nature is served in richer guise; passion burns like the fires in our neighbouring mountain."

Sir William, breathing unevenly, pressed Emma's hand and gazed meaningly into her eyes. At the same time she became aware of subterranean groans and hollow rumblings, and realised that the distant reverberation was already familiar as a steady accompaniment to the gay hubbub of Naples.

"'Tis Vesuvius," she said. "I would Greville were with me; the sound is like Doomsday and makes me fearful. How many weeks is it to October, Sir Will'um?"

Releasing the pressure on her fingers, the Minister looked away, remarking frigidly: "I really do not know, Emma, I have not counted."

A little sigh betokened her relief; she was safe this time, but would it always be possible to manage so clever? . . .

That night, with the aid of the late Lady Hamilton's camel's-hair shawl, Emma performed her attitudes amid the antiquities in Sir William's Etruscan gallery. Standing between pillars unearthed from Pompeii, she looked down a cold vista of columns, mutilated statues, sepulchral vases and sarcophagi to an archway which dimly revealed two footmen on duty in the vestibule. A torch, placed in a sconce at Emma's left hand, illuminated her face and figure as she portrayed terror, triumph, love and laughter. Shadows, black as ebony, lay in bars across the marble floor. Here and there a statue stood forth like a critical spectator; round the bulging body of an immense terra-cotta potiche a silhouette of bearded, naked priests seemed to caper lecherously in the flickering light.

Emma portrayed Hero's vigil, Daphne's flight from Apollo and her *chef-d'œuvre*, the tragedy of Deianira. When her repertoire was concluded, Sir William whispered to Sir Thomas Rumbold: "Did I exaggerate? And do ye blame me for taking the risk?"

"No, by God! There's not a man who wouldn't do the same!"

"To possess so delightful an object under my roof certainly causes me some pleasing sensations, but they are accompanied with anxiety as to prudent management when she discovers the true situation. However, I must hobble in and out of the pleasant scrape as decently as I can, counting myself fortunate in being my nephew's successor. . . ." Sir William broke off on observing that Emma listened.

"What do you mean, Sir Will'um?"

The Minister laughed confusedly. "What do I mean? Well, my dear Em, I shall have to confess that I really don't know! When acting as His Britannic Majesty's Envoy 'tis my duty to discourse as profoundly as I am able, so at home I talk nonsense by way of relaxation!"

Emma was not reassured, and by pleading fatigue contrived to escape to her room before Sir Thomas Rumbold took leave. Her excuse had been genuine, forty-four days of travel in a direction op-

posed to her heart had sapped vitality, causing her to feel spent when released from the necessity of pleasing. But a girl beset by dangers couldn't rest. . . . What had Sir Will'um meant by: "the true situation"? and counting himself "fortunate in being my nephew's successor"? . . . Good God! If Greville hadn't given his solemn promise to come in early autumn,—dearest Greville who never lied and deceived as did ordinary men—she would fear herself betrayed and undone. . . .

Caught on a rising tide of hysteria, she began to walk frantically up and down the long, narrow bedroom. Her frenzied hands tore the fillet from her head, releasing her tawny hair to fall in a glittering mantle to her feet; sobs shook her bosom, fear and despair rendered her beauty wild and terrible. Suddenly she stopped; and with effort imposed fierce restraint upon herself. What was it Greville said? . . . Women were prone to act capriciously and inconveniently when founding their actions on imaginary situations. . . . That was what she wished to recall. . . . Good advice it was, and if heeded would save girls from doubting their lovers. . . . Anyway, it would serve as a lesson to Emma Hart. . . . If Sir Will'um showed fondness, it came about through his passion for beauty, and not because of trickery. . . .

Hurriedly undressing, she crept under the gauze *zanzariere* hanging from a gilded crown suspended over the bed, a stuffy but necessary defence against mosquitoes. Encouraged by spotless drapery to anticipate a peaceful night, Emma resolutely composed herself, soon to discover that a bed at Palazzo Sessa only differed in quality from those she had met with as a traveller. A well-equipped but invisible horde set upon her, adding to tormenting souvenirs from inns at Velletri, Terracina and Capua. A further deterrent to sleep was provided by distant rumblings and hollow sighs from Vesuvius, and the shrieks of a dancer performing to the monotonous music of the *tarantella* outside a wine-shop in Vico Santa Maria. Such strange sounds, coupled with the stark grandeur of a chamber too high for the glow of a rush-light to reach the ceiling, robbed Emma of every brave resolution. Sobbing, she buried her face in the pillow. Oh God, what would she not give to be sleeping beside Greville in the safety of the comfortable low room in Edgware Row, instead of in this vast gilt-and-white place chilly and bleak as a Vauxhall pavilion? . . . Ten years of life wouldn't be too great a price to pay for escape. . . . And 'twas a bargain she could afford to make on a twentieth birthday. . . . How cruel to be an exile on the day that Greville had

always acted kind! . . . Was it more than a thousand miles from Naples to Scotland? . . .

In the morning Emma had dark rings round her eyes when she carried a tray of chocolate to her mother. "The footman wouldn't understand when I told him to bring one cup to you."

Parting the curtains, Mrs. Cadogan cheerfully faced a new day. "I slept like a top," she announced; "'tis the best night's rest I've had since quitting Paddington Green."

"I lay awake; my bed was alive."

"That's because you would give me the best room just done up for Mrs. Damer—t'other mattress will have been laid by; but I'll see to it, bach. There's a deal here I mean to alter!"

Going to the window, Emma flung back the slatted shutters, revealing the wide sweep of Naples Bay. The sun, rising behind Vesuvius, gilded the ribs of old lava radiating from the crater and transformed into falls of coral dust the screes tumbling into the vineyards. Ischia, Capri and the coast to Sorrento were dimly visible through a haze of blue; mother-o'-pearl light tinted a cloudless sky and suffused the glassy water, whereon little boats moved smoothly as swimming fish on a magic flood.

"The mountain is scarcely smoking," Mrs. Cadogan observed. "Last night 'twas lit up by green lightning, while flames and glowing coals shot from the top. 'Tis more interesting to watch than the elm trees and pond at Paddington Green." As she spoke she gave her daughter a sharp glance.

"'Tisn't a view that makes my happiness; were I with Greville I'd joyfully live in a dungeon."

"When you reach my age, Emma, you'll get more satisfaction from God's marvels than a man's face; and I must tell you, gal, to put more smiles on *your* face when you're with Sir Will'um. Beautiful as you be, you can't afford to behave as you feel; even Queen Charlotte has to play-act or lose her livelihood."

"I'll be cheerful as I'm able; but 'tis to Greville and not to Sir Will'um that I owe duty."

Mrs. Cadogan cryptically retorted: "Is it, my gal?"

Emma and her mother breakfasted with their host; eating hot bread, honey and butter from silver plates in the "English Room" that had been decorated to a design made by Mr. Robert Adam. The stucco walls were painted a soothing green with gilded scroll-work and fittings; Carrara marble formed the chimney-piece and tops for

console tables projecting between the three tall windows which opened upon an arched loggia. Sir William's private apartments were all upon the second floor; the "English Room" was in the East wing and looked across a rocky declivity to the roofs, domes, and campanili of Naples, and to Vesuvius.

"I'm established here or on the roof during an eruption," said Sir William; "do 'ee observe the spy-glass always at hand?"

"But, Sir Will'um, don't you go right up the mountain when the lava is running?"

"I have ascended Vesuvius on twenty-two occasions within four years. At some danger to myself I witnessed at close quarters the great eruptions of 1776 and 1777. Small eruptions are of frequent occurrence and I observe them through Ramsden's telescope or from my villa at Posilipo—where I invite you and your mother to dine this day."

"Well, I must say 'tis kind to include me, Sir," said Mrs. Cadogan in gratified tones. "I'm going to enjoy everything, and I mean to make myself useful, Sir, for I see many things that could be done to make you more comfortable."

"I know you for an admirable and capable woman, Mrs. Cadogan, and I fully expect that you will soon be as indispensable at Palazzo Sessa as you were at Warwick Castle. *A propos*, when I last heard from the Earl he gave me a melancholy account of Lord Brooke, who was in grave danger from a violent fever."

"Poor lad! poor lad! 'Tis like he missed my cossetting, for I can tell you it took all my watching to keep him in health." Extracting a large handkerchief from her pocket, Mrs. Cadogan mopped her eyes.

Emma rose and kissed her mother. "Don't fret, Mam, he may get better."

"Not without me, I know!"

Sir William had a dispatch to write, yet he invited Emma to inspect her carriage: "An English post-chaise that I persuaded Mrs. Damer to sell on her accepting Lady Rumbold's offer of a place in her coach to Rome. If ye went about in my carriages, Em, the world would say you were either my wife or mistress!"

The stables and coach-houses ranged round a quadrangle connected with the courtyard by an archway that penetrated the west wing. On each side stone perrons led to a gallery—means of entry to the servants' quarters and the kitchens. Geraniums, clematis, vines and roses

fell in vivid showers over the stained coping, a charming setting for bright-eyed girls indolently gossiping to grooms below. Sir William's presence was welcomed, but it did not accelerate work. "*Buon di, Eccellenza. Iddio v'accompagni!*"

"*Dio vi benedica,*" he shouted back with a wave of his hand. "Ye observe, Emma, that the Neapolitan is no believer in servile respect."

Hardly had he spoken when the women started to clap their hands and cry: "*Bellissima, bellissima creatura!*" In a moment Emma was surrounded by a crowd of eager, laughing admirers, who stroked her face and took possession of her long, golden hair.

"They want to know if you use pink and white paints," said Sir William.

"Indeed I don't!" To prove her words Emma sucked her handkerchief and rubbed it on her face.

"*Tutta naturale sì, all' Inglese!*"

"*Basta!*" Sir William's shout sent them scampering, laughing as they ran. "They say you are so natural and pretty—quite in the English style."

The chaise that Mrs. Damer had left behind accommodated only two persons, but in a snug and comfortable manner. There were three large glasses, two on the sides and one before; it was lined with crimson velvet and elegantly fitted with cushions and fringed pockets. Outside it was painted vermilion under glittering new varnish.

Emma was enraptured. "Oh, Sir Will'm, to think I should have a carriage of my own, me that only five years ago walked with the waggon from Chester!"

"My dear! Are you so pleased?"

"Indeed, I can never thank you!"

"A kiss would reward me more than all the treasure of the Indies!"

"Then you shall have one, and welcome!"

Returning indoors, she was unprepared for the greedy manner in which payment was exacted. Sir William, despite his age, could kiss as fiercely as a sea officer, and that couldn't be beat. . . . At length she tore herself away, and, with a roguish look over her shoulder, ran through stately reception-rooms to her own apartments.

She found her bedroom crowded with servants watching Gasparo inspecting the mattress which Mrs. Cadogan had unstitched. The young major-domo, awed by the Welsh woman's forthright manner, smiled deprecatingly. "Sì, *Signora*, they should not be there, but lice

breed quick in damp weather, *sciocco* and the putting away, both very agreeable to *pidocchi, Signora*."

When Mrs. Cadogan went off to view another bed, Emma sat down to smooth out the ribbon on a new blue hat—Greville's parting gift. Six weeks in a trunk had done the straw no good, and it required all Emma's skill to tweak it back into shape. She cried a little, recalling the day that her lover had chosen it at Mrs. Hackwood's shop in Bond Street, buying it instead of the pink hat priced ten shillings cheaper. Engrossed in her thoughts and in her task, she paid no heed to a knock on the door, and only became aware of Sir William when he came close to her chair. He carried a bandbox, a bunch of bright but mainly broken feathers, and a magnificent gown wrapped in a sheet.

Triumphantly he held up the dress for inspection. "Look, Em, this is just the thing for you! 'Tis India painting on white satin, purchased by my nephew Charles Cathcart for twenty-five guineas in Calcutta, but though 'twas made up for gala occasions, Lady Hamilton never wore the gown."

Gazing at the flowers and birds depicted in brilliant colours, Emma rapturously cried: "Sir Will'um! Sir Will'um! I've never seen their like! But will the gown be long enough? And am I too buxom?"

"Try it on, my dear, try it on; if it be too tight—for I own My Lady had more angles than curves—the dress can be enlarged with satin laid by in this box."

Flinging the gown over her arm, Emma ran to her bedroom, and in a minute returned wearing it. The back fitted well enough, but the front did not meet by a good three inches. Sir William's eyes strayed to the gap and remained fixed. Too late she remembered her old petticoat body that lacked a draw string and had shrunk. . . . She tried to drag the dress together, but the Minister caught her hands and drew them down. "Don't hide your beauty, Em," he said unsteadily; "no one could admire nor reverence it more than I."

She hung her head in confusion. "But it belongs to Greville, and I must not make my charms a temptation, because he would not like it."

"He would not wish you to deny them to me."

"But, Sir Will'um, how could I be true and at the same time act so wanton?"

He looked at her queerly. "Then my motto must be '*Pazienza per Forza*'." Adopting a gaily paternal manner, he unwrapped the extra

yards of painted satin and helped Emma to drape it in a becoming fashion.

"Does it suit me as well as it did Lady Hamilton?"

"My wife had breeding, but not much beauty, and for that reason preferred clothes that were inconspicuous."

"I should have thought you could love only beauty."

"Aye—but I was a younger son, Emma, and could not be too nice. A disagreeable rich devil the devil himself could not have tempted me to marry, but I found lasting comfort in having married, something against my inclination, a virtuous, good-tempered woman."

By enlisting the aid of Mrs. Cadogan and Caterina Castello, a chambermaid who could speak a little English, Emma had ready the painted satin dress to wear on Friday night at the Teatro San Carlo. Accompanied by her mother, Sir William Hamilton and Sir Thomas Rumbold, Emma entered the Minister's box some five minutes before the royal party made their appearance. The vast auditorium was crowded with a richly dressed audience reflected and multiplied in mirrors lining the boxes and fronting the six curved tiers. Flames of a thousand candles dripped in golden showers; the proscenium, crowned with the arms of the Two Sicilies, was the matrix for fallacious vistas of gilded arcades; while the painted ceiling recurred again and again at curious angles and in varying perspectives.

Foreign Envoys, royal visitors and members of the Court occupied boxes to the right and left of the King and Queen. Sir William's *palchetto* was on the curve of the circle and faced the Duke of Cumberland's, similarly situated on the opposite side. The Duke and Duchess, Lady Elizabeth Luttrell and Lord Ferrers were in their places when Emma made her appearance; instantly the two ladies exchanged their fans for quizzing glasses and the Duke and his equerry stood up for a better view. Their action drew other eyes to the British Minister's box; Emma was the focus of attention and an object for subdued applause. Gratified and responsive, she turned eagerly to Sir William. "What am I to do? Shall I bow and say 'thank you'?"

"No, my sweet Em; you sit down and pretend not to know you are a *bellissima creatura*."

She and her mother had the front places, an arrangement which allowed the two elderly men of the world to draw round their chairs in such a way that they could gaze into Emma's face. Hardly were

they seated when the orchestra struck up the national anthem, and, as the audience rose, Ferdinando and Carolina stepped into the royal box. The Queen, glittering with diamonds from the summit of her high head-dress to her knuckles, smiled and bowed graciously; the King made no acknowledgment of loyal greetings, but petulantly cast himself into an arm-chair, and stared gloomily down his long nose. It was left to Count Dietrichstein and General Acton to hand Carolina to her seat.

The opera was *Il Re Teodoro* by Paisiello, a work commissioned by Joseph II during the Neapolitan composer's recent stay in Vienna on his way home from a long engagement under the Empress Catherine of Russia. That the opera had been written to the order of his cultured, interfering brother-in-law possibly accounted for Ferdinando's distaste for the music. He slept, he examined in a pocket mirror a wart growing on his chin, finally his wandering eyes lighted upon Emma. Drawing back so that he could not be seen by his consort, he mimed an inquiry of Sir William and made faces expressive of astonishment and lively admiration.

Gaily urbane, the Minister waved back a greeting as he whispered: "On your life, Emma, take no notice." His injunction was unnecessary, all her attention being given to the stage and the music. The principal singers were Madame Banti and the male sopranist, Luigi Marchesi, whose beautiful voice filled the theatre with the pure, unearthly notes of a *castrato*.

When the interval arrived there was a general stir in the theatre as people prepared to visit their friends; servants entered the boxes and laid suppers on tables that unfolded from the walls; humbler members of the audience sitting in the pit bought ices, lemonade or little saucers of *frutti di mare* from vendors shouting in the gangways. Sir William reluctantly withdrew to pay his respects to royalty, a visit watched by Emma from the tail of her eye. After bowing and kissing the Queen's hand, he took the chair beside her vacated by General Acton, who could be seen paying a similar diplomatic call upon the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland. Meanwhile the King retired to the back of the box to divide his attention between a castle of lemon ice and Emma. The mirrored wall reflected his immoderately large Bourbon nose, thick lips and heavy-lidded dull eyes. At thirty-five Ferdinando's face was set, massive, and roughened from exposure; a giant in stature he towered above Count Dietrichstein and Prince Belmonte, who stood feasting beside him.

While Emma and her mother drank coffee and ate sweet biscuits, Sir Thomas Rumbold pointed out notabilities. "That is Paisiello, just come into the box where the Dominican friar sits eating sugar plums." Looking eagerly at the composer, Emma saw a short, thick-set man with a broad, homely face, a wide, good-humoured mouth and an air of simplicity not commonly associated with genius. Plunging a stubby hand into the bag proffered by the friar, he extracted a juicy *confetto* and meditatively ate it with his mouth open.

"I didn't know that monks visited playhouses," Mrs. Cadogan remarked in surprised tones.

"They do in Naples; prelates and friars lead a most secular life—in fact, the majority see to it that they get the best of both worlds. But Fra Giordano is something of an exception: he is a *bon vivant*, yet has considerable authority over the riff-raff of the town." Touching Emma's lovely bare arm, Sir Thomas drew her attention to another box on the same tier. "There you see two representatives of the Caraccioli, one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the kingdom. The old Marquis yonder is Minister of Finance, late Ambassador to the French Court, recalled to replace della Sambuca, who made a mess of national finances. With the Marquis Caraccioli is his son, Don Francesco, who learnt seamanship under Rodney and now commands one of Ferdinando's fine new warships built by Acton at Carolina's instigation."

Looking across, Emma saw a wizened, brown old man with a rat-trap mouth and a grizzled bob-wig, sitting beside a moody, well-built man of thirty-four whose almond-shaped eyes contemplated with sleepy indifference his pretty, vivacious young wife, whose prattle he did not trouble to acknowledge. The Chevalier Caracciolo wore a glittering new uniform, an epaulette, after the continental fashion, and the Sicilian Order of San Gennaro.

Sir William took leave of the Queen, and after exchanging sallies with his Majesty, quitted the royal box. A minute later he opened the looking-glass door behind Fra Giordano and touched the composer on the shoulder. A conversation ensued, and from the glances cast in her direction Emma surmised herself to be the object of discussion. Presently Giovanni Paisiello rose and followed Sir William. Left alone, the Dominican continued to stare in a friendly way, until, making up his mind, he waved a gay salutation with his bag of sugar plums and threw himself precipitately through the glass door. The trio reached the British Minister's box simultaneously.

"Emma, I have just asked Signor Paisiello to recommend a singing master, and he very naturally declines to do so before hearing your voice. What say you to a little concert to-morrow night? If the Signor will play for you on the harpsichord, very well; if not, I will do my best to scrape an accompaniment on my viola."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, I'll sing and welcome," cried Emma, eager to prove herself the superior of Madame Banti. Addressing the composer she added: "And I've got an elegant new song adapted by Mr. Linley from one of your airs, Sir!"

"Then, Signora, if 'tis not altered beyond my powers, I'll be glad to play for you."

"And afterwards Signora Hart and I will perform a *duetto alla Siriliana*, except that I am *basso*, whereas the poor Neapolitan *cantatori* in my friend Paisiello's operas have suffered accidents transforming them into *soprani e contralti*." Fra Giordano's good-looking countenance was engagingly creased and dimpled with laughter. The Dominican was over six feet in height, well proportioned and extremely stout, which caused his habit to be much shorter in front than at the back. Knowing his carnal weakness, the British Minister hastened to gratify it with a towering helping of ice cream, which the gourmand hurried to demolish before the curtain rose on the second act.

The following morning, Sir William, determined to divert Emma so far as he was able, dispatched invitations to "a little concert by my guest, Mrs. Hart". Count Dietrichstein, General Acton, Dr. Drummond (an English physician resident in Naples) and Philip Hackert, the landscape-painter, were included. All accepted, and on Emma's return from a day spent at Posilipo she found them waiting with Sir Thomas Rumbold, Fra Giordano and Paisiello in the mirrored boudoir when she entered on Sir William's arm.

"Ah—h," cried the friar, touching her head with a blessing, "here comes the English rose who has the voice of a nightingale. *Signori*, you are to have a treat, I promise you; just as your eyes are bewitched by her sweet face, so your ears will be ravished by the lovely notes she will pour upon the air."

Conducted round the circle by Sir William, Emma gave each guest a smile of friendship, a smile different in its appeal to each individual. Even General Acton's wooden visage cracked into a tight smirk of affability, while Count Dietrichstein's mobile features recorded the amorous reactions of a susceptible heart.

Out of compliment to Paisiello, Emma began her recital with his song from the *Heiress*:

*"For tenderness fashion'd, in life's early day,
A parent's soft sorrow, to mine led the way;
The lesson of pity was caught from her eye,
And ere I knew language, I spoke with a sigh.*

*The nightingale plunder'd, the mate-widow'd Dove,
The warbled complaint of the suffering grove;
To youth, as it ripen'd, gave sentiment new,
The object still changing, the sympathy true.*

*Soft embers of passions yet rest in their glow;
A warmth of more pain may this breast never know!
Or if too indulgent the blessing I claim,
Let the spark drop from reason, that wakens the flame."*

"Bravo! Bravo!!" cried Paisiello; "*Da capo!*" shouted the Holy Father; "*Bis, Bis,*" said General Acton, clapping his hands. Emma herself was overcome by the poignancy of the words and their applicability to her situation; even Sir William betrayed emotion.

"Exquisite, but *triste*, my sweet girl. Now, having got us so low, ye must raise us up again. What about one of your raffish songs of the town?"

Emma was shocked. "Oh, Sir Will'um, I couldn't," she whispered; "there was no harm in singing vulgar for you and Greville, but! . . ."

"You are right as always, dearest Em," he murmured regretfully, "though I own I found them vastly entertaining."

Observing his disappointment, she compromised by singing unaccompanied the ballad beginning:

*"Last night I lay in a goose-feather bed,
With my good lord beside me, O.
To-night I'll lie in a tenant's barn
Whatever may betide me, O."*

The choice pleased, and she laughed and blew kisses to the enthusiastic gentlemen. Jumping to his feet, Fra Giordano led her back to the harpsichord. "Now I will sing '*Feneste che 'lluceva*'; afterwards we take it together *duetto*."

The *religieux*, like his friend Paisiello, had been a scholar at San Onofrio a Capuana, and declared he would have found himself *Primo Castrato* of San Carlo had he become an orphan a few years earlier. His fine bass voice had been well trained, and he and Emma together gave a melodious and spirited performance. After bidding the last guest good night, Sir William congratulated himself upon launching his *protégée* satisfactorily; both Count Dietrichstein and General Acton would be useful friends.

"Paisiello was amazed by the purity and range of your voice, and says Galluci should be your master. We will see to it that he *is*, for I mean you to eclipse the Banti."

Emma was so excited by praise and her good performance that she passed another uneasy night; again she listened to the sighs and hollow groans of Vesuvius: subterranean rumblings which in daylight were drowned by the persistent clamour of the city. Woven into her dreams the sounds formed echoes of a gigantic despair, elusive portents of sorrow projected beyond the confines of sleep. She rose listlessly, and finding that Sir William was breakfasting with the King and Queen at Palazzo Reale, made no effort to rouse herself from gloom.

"My goodness, Emma, you are difficult," her mother remarked in exasperation; "one minute you are up in the clouds, the next in the dumps, and 't isn't right to be other than happy seeing everybody indulges and flatters you."

"You don't understand; 'tis not praise, nor riches and fine clothes that can make me happy; without Greville I care not a snap of my fingers for them! "

"So you say, gall! "

Emma got up and angrily swung round on her mother. "Yes, I do say, and mean it too! You talk as if I was a child that didn't know her mind, but I am a woman, I tell you, and I know! I know! I know! ! ! " Three times she stamped her foot in emphasis, then, in fury and unhappiness, she rushed from the room, through vast apartments, designed for great assemblies, across a small courtyard where a fountain splashed, to be brought to a full stop in a book-lined chamber looking down upon Vico Santa Maria. Exhausted by her emotions, she was glad to rest in the *galleria* that had windows looking up and down the lane. The clamour of church bells reverberated on the warm air, for it was Sunday morning, and worshippers hurried down the hill to Sacro Cuore di Gesu. *Cavalieri serventi*, armed

with missals, accompanied ladies of the first rank whose figures and faces were concealed by two black silk petticoats, the top one cast over the head and hooked under the chin.

Wearing short velvet jackets and red skirts fringed with gold, barefooted middle-class women followed in the wake of husbands sweating in Sabbath finery. *Lazzaroni*, carelessly clad in sack-cloth breeches; *miserabili* whining for alms; clergy without cures, elbowed and passed each other, all intent on reaching the church before the clapper rested in the bell. Emma watched until the only wayfarer was a pig, grunting as it idled from side to side in search of garbage.

At her elbow stood a desk furnished with paper, wafers, a silver inkstand, a bundle of goose quills and a sharp penknife. Hitherto Greville had cut her pens, but that happy time was past and she must help herself. . . .

Seven quills were destroyed before she made one that would write well enough for her lover; tearing up the pieces of spoiled paper she took a new sheet and recommenced.

"I arrived at this place on the 26th, and I should have begun to write sooner, but the post does not go till to-morrow, and I dreaded setting down to write, for I try to appear as chearful before Sir William as I could, and I am sure to cry the moment I think of you. For I feel more and more unhappy at being separated from you, and, if my fatal ruin depends on seeing you, I will and must in the end of the summer. For to live without you is impossible. I love you to that degree, that at this time there is not a hardship upon hearth, either of poverty, hunger, cold, death, or even to walk barefooted to Scotland to see you, but what I would undergo. Therefore, my dear, dear Greville, if you do love me, for my sake try all you can to come hear as soon as possible. You have a true friend in Sir William, and he will be happy to see you, and do all he can, to make you happy; and for me, I will be everything you can wish for. I find it is not either a fine horse, or a fine coach, or a pack of servants, or plays or operas can make me happy. It is you that as it in your power either to make me very happy or very miserable. . . ."



CHAPTER TWO

IN the hope that a busy life would make Emma more amenable, Sir William engaged masters for singing, languages and music. Galluci instructed her in the mysteries of *solfeggiare*; Kalkbrenner, the German *Maitre de Chapelle*, gave her lessons on the harpsichord, and Dugueney taught her dancing. Bent on improvement, Emma practised scales and laboured over lexicons, only relinquishing her studies for the morning drive to Posilipo and the evening walk in Villa Reale.

As the weather grew hotter it became a custom to dine at the Minister's seaside villa, a thirty-minute drive along the Chiaia. Leaving the Embassy at one o'clock, by English reckoning, they reached Villa Angelica at half-past twelve according to Neapolitan time; Sir William drove Emma in the phaeton unless they went with Sir Thomas Rumbold in his roomy britschka, when Mrs. Cadogan kept the invalid company at the 'Crocelle Inn.' Richard Rumbold was now too weak to leave his bed and was entirely dependent upon servants for comfort. "A tender-hearted wretch Lady Rumbold must be, gallivanting off to Rome and leaving the poor young man to die with only his father to wait on him," the Welshwoman indignantly observed. With the connivance of Gasparo she concocted viper broth to be transported to the inn in a bright copper pot over a brazier such as a street vendor used for keeping hot his snail soup.

While Mrs. Cadogan was thus charitably employed, Emma sat watching boys and young men diving for shell-fish among the rocks of Posilipo. Armed with strong knives, they plunged head foremost into the water, and, after long intervals, rose to the surface grasping oysters and sea-urchins, which they flung into floating baskets. Nearer the shore old fishermen, immersed to their chins, walked gravely backwards and forwards, moving their feet sideways along the sand, feeling for the sharp edges of razor-shells.

Sir William's two-storeyed villa was built upon a substructure of rock and stonework extended to form a hanging garden above the shore, level with a plantation of olive trees flanking the stony road to the church of Piedigrotta. Sir William and Emma dined on the loggia, both sitting at the same side of the table in order to gaze across the sparkling blue water to Vesuvius smoking and flaming six miles away.

"When we get our next eruption you must watch it from here, my sweet Em; there is no better place for observation, as we are on a direct line. Seated comfortably on this loggia, I have been able to make accurate records for the Royal Society while enjoying scenes as glorious and sublime as any viewed by human eyes."

"I wish to God an eruption would happen soon, Sir Will'um, for I declare I can hardly curb my impatience. Do you think one is brewing?"

"I don't anticipate anything in a grand style, though explosions of scorix and ashes are so frequent that a considerable mountain has formed within the crater, giving Vesuvius a new appearance since the slight eruption of 1784."

"Will you take me up close as you can to where the flames leap?"

"I'll make that a promise and keep it, Emma, when you yield to my passion."

"Sir Will'um, I've explained, kindly as I can, that that can never be, for I belong to Greville, and to him only will I belong. If he doesn't keep his word to come for me in October, I shall go to him, let what be the consequences."

"I've told ye, my dear, he made no mention to me of coming to Naples; indeed, he made it clear that necessity obliged him to end the connexion, and he transferred you to my protection, counting on my attachment and desire to render you happy."

It was not the first occasion that Sir William had told Emma the plain truth; each time it was met with unbridled grief. If tears had impaired her beauty, such unflattering displays of sensibility would have proved more irksome than he found them; but Emma could cry and increase her attraction. Once more he smothered irritation and gently patted her shoulder, accepting the rôle of a father until he could assume that of a lover.

Emma had been in Naples for six weeks and had received no word from Greville, although she had sent by every opportunity long, despairing letters interspersed with descriptions and items of news:

"to make the packet worth paying for." Unknown to Emma, Sir William also wrote to his nephew, a whimsical account of repulses and a request for advice how to act: "if she persists in her refusal to be comforted by me for your loss."

In his uncertainty the Minister redoubled his efforts to amuse and flatter his lovely but obstinate guest. Two artists were painting portraits of a size to match Romney's *Bacchante*. If she came to Naples, Angelica Kauffman had a commission for a fancy picture. Marchmont was to cut a head of Emma for a ring. Later she was to sit to De Non and another artist from Rome. Evening entertainments, described by Sir William as "Diplomatic Parties," were given in her honour; Count Dietrichstein, General Acton, Don Francesco Caracciolo, Fra Giordano and Philip Hackert were invited to dine.

"I'll contrive some women on your visiting list before long, Em. If the Queen looks graciously in your direction ladies of the first rank will soon seek acquaintance."

The office of making Emma interesting to Carolina was entrusted to the Austrian Count. "'Twill come better from you than from me," said Sir William. "Let it be known Emma is the friend of my nephew, the Right Honourable Charles Greville, and that she stays here to be trained for the Opera."

Count Dietrichstein complied by entertaining the Queen with accounts of Emma's rare beauty and singular virtue. "I told her you were a diamond of the first water and the finest creature on earth," said the courtier, raising Emma's hand to his lips.

Hoping for a speedy *entrée* to the Royal Palace, she eagerly inquired: "Did the Queen say she would judge for herself?"

"Not exactly," said the Count, concealing a smile, "but Her Majesty hoped I would gratify her curiosity during the promenade."

While the orchestra from San Carlo played popular airs in Villa Reale and the sun declined behind the wooded ridge of Mount Posilipo, Emma, wearing a Turkish dress of white muslin tied with blue ribbons and Greville's blue hat tilted on her bright curls, slowly walked round the Toro Farnese with the Count as her *cavaliere servente*. Her eyes were modestly downcast until, drawing level with the Queen, she raised them for an instant to gaze trustfully into the royal face. Did she fancy that the Queen slightly inclined her head? . . .

A few days later Emma was included in Sir William's invitation to see the Tribute Horse blessed in the cathedral before setting out

on the journey to Rome. Annually, on St. Peter's Eve, a richly caparisoned white horse, bearing on his back a silver rose, was presented on behalf of the King of Naples to the Pontiff, with the words: "This is the offering due to the Pope for the donation of the absolute dominion of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies." Before leaving the capital the horse, trained by an Austrian *mâitre d'équitation*, showed his tricks to the royal family, foreign Ambassadors, and those of the populace who could crowd into Duomo San Gennaro. The seats allotted to Sir William were close to the high altar and so situated that Emma could watch the Queen without staring. Carolina wore a green silk scarf over a gown of Chambéry gauze, white gloves embroidered up the backs, a chip hat trimmed high with ribbons and flowers. She was thirty-three, had borne her eighth child in January and was again enceinte; her eyelids were puffy and her skin sallow; every few minutes she had recourse to a bottle of camphor, a palliative for ague. Emma, a confirmed Royalist, was blind to physical weakness, and saw only the ruling woman, Maria Carolina, daughter of the Great Empress-Queen, Maria Theresa of Austria.

The King and Queen of the Two Sicilies sat on gilt thrones; their elder children, the Hereditary Prince, Prince Gennaro, Princesses Maria Theresa and Luigia Amalia, were accommodated with silk-covered stools less comfortable than the rush-seated chairs provided for the Court circle. The blessing of the *chinea* was preceded by a cantata composed for the occasion by Paisiello and sung by an augmented choir of a hundred *castrati*. Emma enjoyed the aristocratic company, and she enjoyed the music, but Sir William whispered: "'Tis certain the operations were done in bad weather, for not one of the noun adjectives in the neuter gender sings in tune!"

The cathedral was hung with crimson velvet and gold, silver lamps stood on the high altar and festoons of artificial flowers were hung round the picture representing Christ between San Gennaro and Sant' Athanasius. Cardinal Zurlo, seated upon a throne near the choir, rose to his feet and advanced to the altar rails as a fanfare sounded from without and bells tinkled in the far end of the Gothic nave. Between the granite columns and the half-figures in alto-relievo of sainted bishops, tripped the white Tribute horse, his great muscles and fat haunches moving unnaturally in *haute école*, three sulphur-coloured plumes on his head nodding in time with bells strapped like bracelets round his hocks. On his back, attached to a broad girth

of yellow leather, lay the silver rose on a spray of filigree-work. With the *china* walked Ferdinando's ambassador to the Pope, Constable Colonna, dressed in light brown and bearing a white wand; pages in lilac and silver and servants in royal livery brought up the rear. To a triumphal chorus from the *castrati* the Tribute horse knelt before the altar and received the Cardinal's blessing, then, urged by the Constable's wand, he rose, nodded his plumed head, and minced with rolling haunches across to the right aisle and out into the little Piazza di San Gennaro.

The ceremony being over, the royal party and attendant courtiers prepared to leave the cathedral; the Queen's attack of tertiana, an intermittent fever to which she was subject, threatened to be severe, and she was shaken so violently that Princess Maria Theresa and the Marchesa San Marco were obliged to support her down the nave. In their walk Luigia Amalia made an uneasy progress, harassed by sharp pins surreptitiously stuck into her plump person by her brothers, who walked on either side. The younger princess's stocky, matronly little body was a constant provocation to the Hereditary Prince. Luigia Amalia was nearly eleven, while the heir to the throne was only nine, yet Francesco already assumed dynastic rights.

The King, after drowsing through the ceremony, livened up now release was in sight, and, catching Sir William's eye, made faces expressive of satisfaction. In a language of signs, the Neapolitan's second tongue, Ferdinando invited the British Minister and his charming *protetta* to escape with him through the postern into the small *piazza*. Mouthing a reluctant dissent, Sir William pointed to his place among the foreign Envoys slowly shuffling towards the great door, whereupon the bulky but sprightly monarch bowed to Emma, skipped into the Chapel of San Gennaro, and was seen no more.

Waiting until the cathedral had emptied, Emma and Sir William left on foot to return home by way of Strada dei Tribunali and the Toledo. The narrow streets, crowded with unexpected sights, had cast their spell over Emma, and she liked nothing better than to join the throng. There were no roads and no footpaths, a pavement of lava slabs extended from wall to wall, free to man, beast and vehicle. Strada del Toledo was wide enough to accommodate double lines of stalls outside cave-like shops, but Strada dei Tribunali was so narrow that if a coach came through, all other traffic had to turn about and retreat until a *vico* provided a refuge. No sun penetrated

to the bottom of this gully; on either side carved stone balconies projected in tiers up the façades of immensely tall houses. Sixth and seventh stories were occupied by the best families, who thus escaped the unpleasant odours circulating below; neither aristocrats nor people of the lesser sort considered it derogatory to dry their linen on poles extended from their balconies. Skirts spread over wide hoops rose and fell like balloons; sheets, night-shirts, shifts, all obscured the view of a distant strip of sky.

It was the time of the second milk delivery, and supercilious goats with swinging udders scavenged while awaiting a sister who climbed with the *caprajo* from tenement to tenement.

"When I look at their faces," said Emma, "I think of those queer horned men prancing round your big vase—the one broken at the top."

"*Satyri*, my sweet Em; indeed I think you are right—goats and *Sileni* have more points of resemblance than their feet."

"Poor creatures! I shouldn't blame them for their looks, but I wish they kept their vermin more to themselves, for I never pass one but some of its fleas hop to me."

"'Tis a fault goats share with those they serve."

"Yes; of fleas and lice there is millions. In the cathedral just now I found it hard to behave elegant when I wanted to scratch."

Sir William chuckled: "The King didn't exercise so much control; *transeat in exemplum*."

After the gloom of the narrow street they were dazzled by the brightness in Largo dello Spirito Santo. The sun hung like a brazen ball in the azure sky; hot air shimmered above the dusty lava pavement. There were no shadows and there was no shade; the intense uniform light had a strangely flattening effect, near and distant objects fused together, buildings were robbed of substance while gaining significance in colour and detail. It was like a picture painted in enamel by an artist who ignored perspective. In honour of the King and Pius VI, tall palaces of stone and stucco were in *fiocchi*, balconies were draped in the Papal colours, vivid awnings extended from windows, geraniums and roses dripped over carved balustrades.

Sir William pointed an amber-headed cane at the frowning semi-circular façade of San Sebastiano, empty since Ferdinando had expelled the Jesuits from his domains. Heavy wrought-iron grilles protected the dusty windows; on the great doors that were barred and padlocked someone had painted: "*Viva il Papa*."

"San Sebastiano's derelict condition counts as a *stramazzone* to Papal prestige in the duel between the King and the Pontiff."

"If the King feels unfriendly to the Pope, why did he give that fine present of a white horse?"

"And seven thousand ducats! 'Tis a custom, and customs are hard to break, but I think a pretext for doing so will be found ere long. 'Twill be more acutely felt than any of Ferdinando's acts of rebellion, for the *chinea* is a public acknowledgment that the King of Naples is a vassal of the Holy See."

Courage and vigilance were requisite when crossing Spirito Santo into it converged slow-moving oxen dragging heavy drays; *gimeiri*, fantastic progeny of mares mated with bulls, harnessed to primitive country carts; strings of mules hidden beneath enormous piles of hay; herds of pigs and goats, all following erratic courses to the confusion of young Signori racing in hackney-chaises. These two-wheeled vehicles were popular with men of sporting tastes because of the excitement and danger forthcoming for six *carlini* an hour. The hirer of a *calesso*, perched on a gaily painted triangular seat attached to the axle-tree, had the task of guiding with reins fastened to a cavesson a stallion that went the faster the more he was pulled; only the yelling *carozziere*, balancing at the back, had power to stop the horse with a blow from a long whip.

"Sir Thomas Rumbold was always complaining of our traffic dangers," said Sir William, nimbly leaping aside, "but I declare dodging *calessi* is excellent training for the chase; the charge of a wild boar is no swifter nor more threatening to life."

Emma's thoughts followed Sir William's first observation. "D'you think poor Richard will reach England alive?"

"No; he'll die on the journey. It always puzzles me why consumptives are brought to Naples, where the winter is damp and chill as possible and only charcoal braziers to make things tolerable. I couldn't count the obseques I have been obliged to conduct during my twenty-two years as British Minister."

"I'm glad Sir Thomas would have his wife to give help and comfort on the journey."

"My dear Em, ye don't know the lovely Joanna! But if Willett Payne, Hugh Conway and Anne Damer were persuaded to accompany his party to Paris, Sir Thomas would be admirably fixed."

On entering Strada del Toledo Emma and Sir William were met by a score of contending odours and a ceaseless clamour. Tall, bal-

coned houses rising above arched entrances to cavernous shops stretched in straight lines that converged at Largo del Palazzo Reale. The Toledo, besides being the widest and longest street in Naples, was distinguished by raised foot paths, appropriated by itinerant traders for the erection of tables and booths, a practice leading to predatory warfare with shopkeepers whose premises they obstructed. Everything was going forward in the busy thoroughfares; the shoemaker, the tailor, the joiner, all were at work. A cook, stationed by a glowing charcoal brazier, ladled huge masses of macaroni from a cauldron for customers to swallow at a black greasy table behind him; a snail-seller, established with his spluttering stove and bright copper pots on the edge of the pavement, allowed some of his fattest specimens to crawl on his bare arm by way of advertisement. A hollow-eyed monk with foam-flecked lips preaching from a stone post, threatened perdition to all who neglected to give him alms; a fat *assistito*, wearing a long gown decorated with lottery tickets, shouted the winning numbers he had predicted for last week's *tombola* and temptingly offered enlightenment for the next; Salvatore figures were selling off cheaply; bargains were going in tortoiseshell and coral bijoutry. Not all vendors were stationary; handsome, carefully dressed women of Avellino, noticeable for variegated flaxen-yellow hair bleached with a lye of wood-ashes, walked disdainfully, carrying baskets of fruit which they were too proud to sell; energetic butter-women from Gioja, with gaily embroidered aprons and falling veils, shouted as they came along; a merchant from Beneventum gravely dispensed oil from a cart drawn by buffaloes. Up and down moved an idle throng of housewives, *lazzaroni*, soldiers, white Dominicans, brown Capuchins, black Carthusians, priests, opera-singers; girls in the fantastic half-Turkish garb of Badessa; jaunty peasants from Terra di Lavora armed with daggers and wearing coats fluttering with ribbons; washerwomen carrying baskets of clothes on their heads; little children dressed as monks and nuns, *oblati* promised to the monastic state.

"*Fa luogo! Fa luogo, da luogo!*" shouted running footmen, trying to clear a way for a great rumbling coach; "*Ial Ial!*" yelled a coachman up-perched on a green-and-gold *calesso*.

As Sir William philosophically regarded the scene he observed: "It costs a man of quality twelve *carlini* (about five shillings English) if he runs over the child of a *lazzarone*; should the wife meet the

accident 'tis two ducats, live or die; three is the compensation for the master of the family, and no words pass here over trifles."

They stood drinking iced lemonade beside the stall of an *acquacedratajo*. The table, covered with thick rumblers, was surmounted by a scarlet-and-gold triumphal arch decked with myrtle and protected by medals, images of saints and charms against the Evil Eye. A tub of snow stood in the middle festooned with lemons, oranges and blue-and-gold paper banners.

Suddenly a clear, silvery bell dominated the clamour; instantly there was silence; people crowded to the side of the street and knelt down, as a priest, preceded by an acolyte bearing a cross, advanced with careful steps, carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the dying.

Emma looked dubiously at the filthy pavement and at Sir William already on his knees. "In Rome," he said, "do as the Romans do."

Gingerly she did as required. "One 'ud think," she whispered, "the Neapolitans would be more particular how they behaved, seeing they may have to grovel in their dirt."

Scarcely had the priest passed than the crowd were on their feet, shouting and haggling. The pause of seeming adoration was over and it had left no trace. Emma finished her lemonade, which had lost its icy tang, and refused Sir William's offer of further refreshment. "When my thirst is quenched I begin wondering if the tumbler glasses were clean and in what dirt the snow was kept."

"Ease your mind on that score, for it comes fresh daily from pits behind Castel-à-Mare; soon after sunrise you can see the snow boats unloading at the *Molo* and the merchants waiting with carts to take it away."

"Sure I can't think what the Neapolitans would do in London, where the poor can't get a cool drink however hot the weather."

"A scarcity of snow here would occasion a mutiny as certainly as a dearth of corn in any other country; to prevent this the King keeps the monopoly, which he farms out at a great rent."

Emma and Sir William were approaching Largo del Palazzo Reale when a clatter of hoofs coming from the rear caused them to seek sanctuary behind a stationary cart. A horseman in the royal uniform carrying a wallet on his back was followed by a couple of mounted soldiers armed with loaded carbines.

"There goes Fabiani, the King's messenger, bringing the mail," said Sir William.

Emma's face flushed and her eyes sparkled. "Perhaps there'll be

something for us from Greville." She walked so fast that the Minister had to lengthen his stride to keep abreast.

"There is no need for impatience," he observed in dry and chagrined tones. "Should there be any English letters 'twill be a couple of hours before they are sent from the Palace, but I have no reason to entertain such expectation. 'Tis true Fabiani sometimes obliges me, but only as a courtesy to one in special favour with Their Majesties."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, why do you dash my hopes so cruel?"

"My dear, I have been very patient, knowing your great affection for Charles, but the time has come for you to face your situation. Charles no longer has the means to keep you, even if he would; in sending you to me he considered he acted in your best interests. Necessity will oblige ye to yield to some man's arms, and mine, though somewhat bony, are likely to afford more lasting comfort than many that are softer."

"But, Sir Will'um, I tell you you must be wrong," cried Emma in fierce distress. "Greville promised faithful to come for me in September or October, and on that understanding only did I set out."

"Men are often compelled to make false promises, Em, to extricate themselves from entanglements."

"Then what can women expect?"

"But little if their hearts rule their heads. A wise woman like Sally Wells—the person I often heard Greville hold up for your emulation—sweetly acquiesces to the inevitable, thereby making a friend of a lover."

"I'd never do that!"

Sir William shrugged his shoulders: "Then, Emma, though ye are the most beautiful and enchanting woman I have ever met—and I have known many—ye can't anticipate anything but the *pavé*!"

Sir William expressed himself harshly, yet he was much perturbed by Emma's misery and stubborn loyalty. In addition, he was more in love than he cared to own and suffered smartly from her indifference. On reaching Palazzo Sessa he left her abruptly and ran up the winding staircase to his own quarters. Towards evening he sent Vincenzo with a short enclosure from Greville. Emma kissed the paper rapturously, and there her joy ended, for it proved but a brief acknowledgment of her letter from Rome and an anticipation of her safe arrival "at the villa provided for your accommodation, where, ere this, I hope ye have obliged Sir William."

She was overwhelmed, and in her desperation sought her mother. Mrs. Cadogan embraced her tenderly, but would detect no lover's subterfuge behind Greville's terse words. "Oh, Mam, Greville writes so short because he's wearied by travelling; and about Sir Will'um, that just means making myself agreeable."

"Nonsense, gal! You're so fond you won't face the truth. But you must, and the sooner the better for all of us. Mr. Greville has grown tired, as gentlemen do, but has acted more honourable than most in finding you another protector—aye, and one with more to offer! If I was in your place, Emma, I'd welcome the change, for 'tis much better to be loved than to love, as you'll know when you reach my age. With Mr. Charles you did the loving and he did the taking; with Sir Will'um 'tis the other way, and you hold all the cards if you choose to play them!"

"Oh, Mam, how can you talk so worldly when my heart is broke?"

"What's to become of us if we don't think and act sensible? If you won't go to Sir Will'um's bed, he'll send us back to England. I can get work, but how will you do? Mr. Greville has shut his door, you are spoiled for domestic service, so there's only that silly young Willoughby to take you."

"You know I'd never look at him!"

"Well, there's your choice, gal! Remember, we have been here nearly ten weeks, and a gentleman's patience is short."

That night they were to accompany Sir William to an Opéra Bouffe at the Teatro de' Fiorentini, but while getting ready, Vincenzo came again, bringing excuses from His Excellency, who found himself unexpectedly engaged.

Mrs. Cadogan nodded meaningly at her daughter. "I told you, Emma!"

No more was seen of the Envoy until dinner on the following day. He appeared genial as usual, unlike Emma, who was ill at ease. "Well, Em, I suppose you're happy as the proverbial lark, now Greville has written?"

She blushed, crumbling some bread between nervous fingers. "There was naught in it that I liked."

"And little to please in mine; Bartolozzi's engravings of what I must now call the 'Portland Vase' have cost more, Boydell says, than can be realized by a subject not saleable like a modern print. As I am out of pocket nearly four hundred pounds for drawings and

plates, Charles has bought and set up a press in the laundry at Edgware Row and intends supervising the printing himself."

"Is Greville at home?"

"Oh yes," returned Sir William absently: "'tis unlikely he'll leave town until after the season."

"Then 'twas all lies about Scotland and visiting influential friends?" she demanded in a stifled voice.

Sir William, looking embarrassed and annoyed, answered evasively: "Last summer he mentioned the possibility, but I heard nothing more."

"But I talked to you of him being in Scotland, and you never denied it!"

"My dear, ye speak so incessantly of Charles, that I confess to paying little attention, and in any event I am not responsible for his actions."

A kick under the table from Mrs. Cadogan silenced Emma and allowed that astute woman to change the subject. "I wish there was news of Lord Brooke, Sir, for it must be known now which way his illness is going."

"He improves—a letter came yesterday from Lord Warwick."

"Thank God," responded Mrs. Cadogan.

The Court migrated to the palace at Caserta for the first fortnight in July, and with the King and Queen went Sir William Hamilton. Alone with her mother in the vast mansion off Vico Santa Maria, Emma realized how much she missed the genial, kindly Minister. Six hours of the day were devoted to lessons and practising: her carriage and Sir William's boat were at her disposal, but she found no pleasure in long expeditions without his company. Instead, she slipped out into the streets to mingle with the crowds or accompanied her mother to the market at Santa Lucia. By some means Mrs. Cadogan had gathered into her own hands the catering for His Excellency's private table and had established friendly business relations with traders on the quay. Quicker at languages than Emma, she had already a sufficient command of the *lazzaroni* dialect to bargain with aplomb. The best *calamaretto*, *frutti di mare* and oysters were sold at sloping stalls between the fishermen's church and the Fontana del Giganti; fish of lesser quality, aniseed cakes, chalybeate and sulphur water from adjacent mineral springs were relegated to awning-covered tables along the shore.

Strada Santa Lucia followed the eastern side of Pizzofalcone; it was sheltered by the island and escarpments of Castel dell' Uovo and a rocky shoal that, acting as a breakwater, provided a haven for small boats in rough weather. Behind the wide, cobbled causeway, tall houses with cracked and stained façades leant together for mutual support, venerable survivors of earthquakes and storms, witnesses of famines, rebellions, plagues and pestilences. Crazy balconies, draped with washing and fishing-nets, mounted one above another to flat roofs where pigs and poultry were kept inside flimsy palings that sometimes gave way, to the delight of men quick enough to grab a fallen animal as it hit the pavement. Breaking the line of the houses were five narrow gaps, entrances to *fondachi*, warrens in which the poorest fisher-folk herded in high, dark tenements that ran back into the rock of Pizzofalcone.

From the British Embassy Santa Lucia could be reached by descending the promontory on the west side facing Chiaia, thence along the Chiatamone to the point. Alternatively, by keeping to high ground and skirting the Palace, a flight of steps beside the Arsenal led to the eastern end of the quay. Emma and her mother usually made a round walk by going one way and coming back the other. At first Emma was shocked by the free manners of the fishermen and *lazzaroni* frequenting the water-front. In hot weather it was a common thing for them to discard all clothing, and walk nonchalantly naked save for flopping rush hats and the pictures of saints and the Virgin Mary burnt with gunpowder into their skins.

During Sir William's absence the smoke and flames issuing from Vesuvius had greatly increased, and from no place could they better be seen than from Strada Santa Lucia, which looked directly across the eastern bay to the mountain. Loud detonations accompanied discharges of ashes and blazes of fire; volumes of grey-black smoke rolled down upon Torre del Greco; variegated lightning flickered on the sky—blue, green, yellow, and sometimes white, like artificial flames produced by camphor. "*La montagna fu cattiva*," said the fishwives, looking apprehensively at trickles of lava veining the grey crown of the volcano. Prayers were said and candles burnt before San Gennaro's shrine on Ponte della Maddalena: blessed San Gennaro, who had so often saved Naples from the wrath of the mountain.

Sir William's return preceded a midnight storm of a magnitude unknown to Emma and her mother. Cracks of thunder, hollow subterranean groans, wind, rain and the sound of waves beating upon the

shore, rendered speech inaudible. Vivid lightning gashed the sky—illuminating in ghastly radiance the whole reach of the bay from Ischia to Capri; flashes succeeded by blackness so profound that substance seemed to slip away engulfed, leaving only the floating summit of Vesuvius, a calyx of flame borne on streamers of red-hot lava. Exalted and excited by the turmoil, Emma threw on a cloak and dashed upstairs to Sir William's apartments, from whence a stone stair led to the roof. In the darkness she struggled with bolts; when the last was undone, the wind wrenched the door from her hand and sent it crashing against the outside wall; it tore off her cloak, and in a flicker of electric light she saw it carried like a great bird over the parapet. Undaunted, she stood lashed by wind and rain, deafened by thunder and dazzled by lightning; her eyes, fixed upon Vesuvius, saw now a fountain of fire, now a pillar of luminous smoke, again only a creeping pattern of molten tentacles. A blinding flash, a bang and the sound of masonry falling made her start and glance towards the Maltese Minister's *palazzo* in Largo di Cappella; burning mingled with the smell of sulphur in the air, shrieks rose above the wind, torches blazed into yellow plumes until rain acted as extinguisher.

Realizing her danger, Emma's excitement rose; not since the racketing days with Willett Payne had she felt so wild and recklessly gay. Laughing, she sprang upon the parapet and stood poised against the tearing wind; the greeny-blue lightning that flickeringly revealed the bay provided intermittent glimpses of the courtyard far below. Did she fail to keep a nice balance there'd be little left of beauty. . . .

Sir William, emerging upon the roof, saw her illumined, leaning upon the wind, with her hair streaming behind her, like a figurehead breasting a tempest. He called, but his voice was drowned in the tumult; fearful lest a sudden fright might jeopardize her balance, he approached cautiously until he was near enough to reach out and clasp her in his arms. As he clutched and dragged her backwards she shrieked and tried to free herself.

"My God, Emma! Are ye mad?"

She heard him not, but seeing who was her captor, smiled apologetically. Holding her fast, he urged her across the roof and through the door. After the storm it seemed strangely quiet upon the stairs; only Sir William's rapid, uneven breathing sounded close to her ear. Emma's muslin gown was saturated and clung tightly as her skin, her hair dripped upon her ankles, yet she was warm and glowing, a seductive weight in the arms of a prospective lover. His hand began the

quest she knew so well, whilst his mouth pressed in harsh greed upon her lips. Neither repelling nor responding, she awaited events.

"Emma," he whispered huskily, "I've been patient, though sorely tempted. Now you're going to be sensible?"

"I'm not, Sir Will'um, if you mean being false to Greville!"

"My dear, were there any hope that your loyalty would be rewarded, I would stand back, but there is none. Charles has wearied, as young men will. After all, your association lasted longer than many marriages." Sir William's voice came jerkily as he urged her down the stairs. A bar of orange lamp-light shining through the open door of the ante-room adjoining his bedchamber showed a chequered marble flooring, a gilded table supported on winged lions, stools of ivory and gold, a statue of Eros and a graceful incinerary urn. Accustomed as she had become to fine furnishings, Emma was impressed by splendours fit for a King, splendours that belonged to the King's Envoy and foster-brother who sued unavailingly for her favours. . . . Something remained of the heady excitement engendered by the electric storm, causing a painful situation to appear in a new and glorified light.

"Now, my sweet Em, all this nonsense is over, and you will come to me and learn to forget. In youth grief is severe, but passes quickly. At twenty-six I believed my heart broken, yet I can now meet Lady Beauclerk and feel no twinge—not even of regret."

Emma shivered, her garments dripped upon the floor; outside the wind and rain lashed against the shutters and thunder muttered to the groaning mountain. "Though I can't believe it, I'll agree that the time may come when Greville will mean nothing to me; but 'tis not yet, and I tell you solemn, Sir Will'um, that if he does not fetch me as promised, somehow I'll get back to England, if 'tis only to see him once to say good-bye."

"And then what?"

Emma looked at him blankly. "Then nothing matters no more, and 'tis all one to me if I go to the devil or into the river."

"But it is of consequence to me, especially as I believe the exaggerated transports of youth make any catastrophe possible. Will you promise to remain here on the—er—decorous basis now existing, until I can get Charles to state in writing the terms upon which he sent you to me? If lack of means alone dictated his policy, I'll make that right by giving you a hundred a year for your share of the *ménage*; if weariness was the factor, ye must accept it. I make no stipulations—I

want no forced embraces, but I shall hope the little love you profess for me may grow to something bigger. Will ye try to make it, Emma? Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, Sir Will'um, yes indeed! For 'tis true, next to Greville I love you more than anyone, and a wretch I should be, not to, seeing your kindness. 'Tis wonderful—a hundred a year! 'Twill more than keep mother and me at Edgware Row, and with our work added, we'll be a help and no hindrance."

"But mind! No mention to Charles of the allowance until we've had his letter."

"I can keep my word, Sir Will'um," she said proudly.

"I'm sure of it! Now, I've kept ye up long enough in your wet clothes." Taking her face between his hands, he gazed earnestly into her candid eyes, then slowly kissed her.

At the top of the stairs, one of Ferdinando Sanfelice's elaborate double winding staircases, he leant over the balustrade to whisper: "I could make ye happy, Em!"

Looking up, she gently answered: "Good night, Sir Will'um; never think me ungrateful."

Emma slept late, and met the Minister leaving the breakfast-room. His greeting was kinder than usual, but his manner had undergone subtle alteration: he was deferential as at their first meeting; but, strangely, the change did not please. In the days that followed he avoided *tête-à-têtes* by keeping the Embassy filled with company. The number of Emma's admirers had increased, she could count several nobles in the crowd that followed her in the Villa Reale, and Count Dietrichstein claimed to be her *cavaliere servente*. Mid-July brought another *beau*: Lord Hervey, a Post Captain in the British Navy, eldest son of the Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry. Lord Bristol and Sir William had been at school together, and still enjoyed much of each other's company, as the eccentric prelate found the balmy air of Italy much more to his taste than the damp fogs of Ireland. His son, John Augustus Hervey, was young, dashing, and had distinguished himself by quashing a mutiny in the *Raisonnable* caused by delay in paying off the Channel Fleet at the peace of 1783. Susceptible as most sea officers, Lord Hervey lost no time in suggesting an elopement to England and the family manor of Ickworth, standing empty in Suffolk.

"Of course you are asking mother to come with us?" Emma innocently assumed.

"Good God forbid!" he retorted.

"Then I stay here, for I go nowhere without her!"

After the storm which wrecked the Maltese Minister's house, Vesuvius had given no further spectacular displays, but sulkily smoked like the great chimney of Beaufoy's vinegar works at Lambeth. The weather was too hot and dusty for driving. When Emma was not at her lessons she was on the water with Sir William and his friends, seated under a striped awning in his barge, rowed by a dozen boatmen smartly dressed in red, white and blue. In the stern sat two hautboys, a clarinet, a flageolet and a French horn, Sir William's "Band of Music," playing popular airs. Skimming over the clear water, Emma looked down at sea oranges and sea lemons growing on the sandy bed, and at iridescent fishes darting from the boat's shadow. Generally the Minister and his guests embarked from Molo Grande beside Castel Nuovo, and thence took a westerly course to the point of Posilipo, in order that Emma could place bread and oil in a basket hanging over the cliff for the maintenance of the hermit who lived between a stone statue of San Francesco and the ruined walls of the villa of Lucullus. If there was time the boatmen rowed round the cape towards the island of Nisida and the lovely gulf of Baiæ. Sir William's barge was not the only one in the vicinity; the King frequented the same waters with a band of music superior by four French horns to that of his friend "*Il Cavalier' di Inghilterra*." Ordering his barge alongside, Ferdinando sat with his hat on his knees while all the French horns and the band played to Emma *Rule Britannia* and *Rassereni Amico Amore*; afterwards he would bow and lean over the gunwale to tell Sir William how much he regretted his ignorance of *la lingua Inglese*. If the Queen was not present at the opera or the Villa, he attached himself to Emma's train of admirers; the King's gallantry afforded her much satisfaction, and she hastened to acquaint her lover: "But Greville, the King as eyes, he as a heart, and I have made an impression on it."

She was flattered and spoilt, yet could not be happy. No answers came to her weekly letters, and Sir William reported similar neglect. "Not," he said, "that I attach importance to a few weeks' silence. Often months elapse without word from Charles, and as for Robert, he scarce writes once in a year."

The Minister's calm outlook in no way mitigated Emma's increasing misery and apprehension, only the penning of a distracted appeal acted temporarily as a sedative.

"I am now onely writing, to beg of you for God's sake to send me one letter, if it is onely a farewell. Sure I have deserved this, for the sake of the love you once had for me. Think, Greville, of our former connexion, and don't despise me. I have not used you ill in any one thing. I have been from you going of six months, and you have wrote one letter to me—enstead of which I have sent fourteen to you. So pray, let me beg of you, my much-loved Greville, only one line from your dear, dear hands. You don't know how thankful I shall be for it. For, if you knew the misery I feel, oh! your heart would not be intirely shut up against me. Some of your friends—your foes perhaps; I don't know what to stile them—have long wisht me ill. But, Greville, you never will meet with anybody, that has a truer affection for you than I have, and I onely wish it was in my power to shew you what I could do for you. As soon as I know your determination I shall take my own measures. If I don't hear from you, and that you are coming according to promise, I shall be in England at Cristmass at farthest. Don't be unhappy at that. I will see you once more for the last time. I find life is unsuportable without you. Oh, my heart is intirely broke. Then, for God's sake, my ever dear Greville, do write me some comfort. I don't know what to do. I am now in that state. I am incapable of anything. I have a language-master, a singing-master, musick, &c, but what is it for? If it was to amuse you, I should be happy. But, Greville, what will it avail me? I am poor, helpless and forlorn. I have lived with you 5 years, and you have sent me to a strange place, and no one prospect, but thinking you was coming to me. Instead of which, I was told I was to live, you know how, with Sir William. No, I respect him, but no never. Shall he peraps live with me for a little wile like you, and send me to England. Then what am I to do? What is to become of me? But excuse me, my heart is ful. I tell you, give me one guiney a week for everything, and live with me, and I will be content. But no more, I will trust to Providence; and wherever you go, God bless you, and preserve you, and may you allways be happy! But write to Sir William. What as he done to affront you?

If I have spirits, I will tell you something concerning how we go on, that will make my letter worth paying for. Sir William wants a picture of me, the size of the Bacante, for his new apartment, and he will take that picture of me in the black gown at Romney's, and I have made the bargain with him, that the picture shall be yours, if he will pay for it. And he will. And I have wrote to Romney, to send it. . . ."

Optimism imparted by writing and posting letters lasted a day or two, then gradually declined until another opportunity for dispatch provided a fresh fillip.

July terminated in a depressing manner. A note from Sir Thomas Rumbold announced Richard's death on the journey and the Earl of Northington's in Paris:

"Two such events in the same entourage had a very saddening effect, and as the iniquitous law of *Droit d'Aubaine* immediately came into operation with its attendant distress to the relatives, Lady Rumbold and I were glad to leave final formalities to Captain Willett Payne and Hugh Conway who propose remaining another month in the French capital."

"What is *Droit d'Aubaine*?" Emma inquired as Sir William re-folded the letter.

"'Tis a law whereby all the effects of foreigners dying in France, Scots and Swiss excepted, are seized on behalf of the King, who leases the contingent profits. Were a concession possible, Hugh Conway might contrive it through Marie Antoinette—that is, if truth underlies the rumour bracketing them together."

"What? Are there people base enough to say the sister of the Queen of Naples has a lover?" Emma demanded in shocked tones.

"Aye, and they accuse your heroine, too, my dear. I have heard many cited as favourites, but pay little attention, well knowing that a faction will always indict an attractive queen as *une femme galante*."

"I call it shameful; it makes a queen seem just like an ordinary woman!"

Sir William laughed. "I have known several queens, and never observed that they differed from women of lesser rank."

An end was put to boating by storms of rain and violent south winds that drove the sea in great breakers over the mole and against the fortress walls of Castel Nuovo. Beggars and vagrants retreated to the caves under Capo di Monte to sleep in crowds like sheep in a pinfold. Every doorway was a shelter, only horses were left to endure the driving rain, and, harnessed to gaily painted *calessi*, stood dejectedly, their long tails swept under their bellies, their bright headplumes collapsed and dripping dye. Emma caught a severe chill, but was consoled because Queen Carolina was confined to the palace by a familiar affliction.

Greville's response to Sir William's confidential letter arrived when

Emma's cold was at its worst. Addressed to Signora Hart, it was cruel and explicit, but, so far as the subject allowed, expressed in the best taste. Its gist, shorn of rhetoric, recommended Emma to coquet and oblige Sir William by going to his bed, as no haven remained at Paddington Green. A blue hat and a pair of gloves would shortly arrive as a parting gift:

"To put me on the footing of a friend. For you have the example of others precisely in your situation, who have kept friends though the connexion is ended. If Mrs. Wells had quarrell'd with Adm: Keppell, she would not be respectable as she now is."

In a postscript he added that Lord Brooke had died on the 2nd of May.

For some time Emma sat stunned, only conscious of a dull, heavy ache under her belt-buckle. It was not the first time that despair had stricken her stomach instead of her heart. . . .

Suffering in a blunted way, she cried and blew her nose while an incorporate self observed with minute attention plaster crumbling from the gilded wing of an opincus supporting a console table; a small green lizard licking flies from a mirror; a pulled thread in the brocaded curtain which displaced the pattern of a pomegranate.

Gradually she began to feel more like herself. Both egos merged together, and her mind, working with facility, supplied an altruistic motive for her lover's strange advice. 'Twas to save her from poverty that Greville urged surrender to Sir William. . . . When he learned that poor Emma was promised independence his attitude would change. . . .

Opening her desk, she took out a sheet of thick quarto paper, and, without waiting to cut a new pen, began rapidly to write:

"I have received your letter, my dearest Greville, at last, and you don't know how happy I am at hearing from you, however I may like some parts of your letter. But I won't complain. It is enough, I have paper that Greville wrote on. He as folded it up. He wet the wafer. How I envy thee to take the place of Emma's lips, that she would give worlds, had she them, to kiss those lips! But if I go on this whay I shall be incapable of writing. I onely wish that a wafer was my onely rival. But I submit to what God and Greville pleases. I allways knew. I have ever had a foreboding, since first I began to love you,

that I was not destined to be happy; for their is not a King or Prince on hearth, that could make me happy without you. So onely consider, when I offer to live with you on a hundred a-year Sir William will give me, what you desire. And this from a girl that a King, &c, is sighing for! As to what you write to me, to oblige Sir William, I will not answer you. For, oh! if you knew what pain I feel in reading those lines where you advise me to W—— . . . Nothing can express my rage! I am all madness! Greville, to advise me!—you, that used to envy my smiles! How, with cool indifference, to advise me to go to bed with him, Sir Wm! Oh, that is worst of all! But I will not, no I will not rage. If I was with you, I would murder you and myself booth. I will leave of, and try to get more strength; for I am now very ill with a cold . . . I wont look back to what I wrote. I only say I have had 2 letters in 6 months, nor nothing shall ever do for me, but going home to you. If that is not to be, I will except of nothing, I will go to London, their go into every excess of vice tell I dye, a miserable, broken-hearted wretch, and leave my fate as a warning to young whomen never to be two good; for now you have made me love you, you made me good, you have abandoned me; and some violent end shall finish our connexion, if it is to finish. But, oh! Greville, you cannot, you must not give me up. You have not the heart to do it. You love me, I am, sure; and I am willing to do everything in my power—and what will you have more? And I onely say this is the last time I will either beg or pray, do as you like.

I am very sorry Lord Brooke is dead, and I am sincerely sorry for Sir James and Lady Peachy. But the W—k family won't mind it much. We have been 7 weeks in doubt, whether he was dead or no, for Sir William had a letter from Lord Warwick, and he said Lord B. was better. So I suppose he must have had a relapse. Poor little boy, how I envy him his happiness! . . .

Pray write to me and don't write in the stile of a friend, but a lover. For I wont hear a word of freind. It shall be all love and no friendship. Sir William is ever freind. But we are lovers. I am glad you have sent me a Blue Hat and gloves. My hat is universally admired through Naples. God bless you, my dear Greville, prays your ever truly and affectionate Emma Hart.

P.S. Pray write, for nothing will make me so angry, and it is not to your interest to disoblige me, for you don't know the power I have hear. Onely I never will be his mistress. If you affront me, I will make him marry me.—God bless you for ever.”



CHAPTER THREE

EMMA'S devotion withstood eight months of neglect by her lover and a protracted siege by his devisee. Piqued and baffled, Sir William debated changing a considerate policy to one of rapine. While his conduct was in the balance a letter came from Greville, written with candour from one man to another. To show it to Emma was dishonourable, but it would throw her into his arms. In the dilemma he consulted Mrs. Cadogan.

"'Twill bring her to reason if she reads the truth in black and white, and sure 'tis time your patience was rewarded, Sir, for her stubbornness has been enough to weary any gentleman."

"It has not been flattering," the Minister acknowledged.

"Don't take it to heart," Mrs. Cadogan earnestly counselled. "Emma will turn to you when she accepts Mr. Greville's dismissal, and all the more lovingly for the trick he has played. I know my daughter, Sir: she's quick to resent a wrong and eager to repay kindness."

Sir William stuffily responded: "I don't want her to oblige me through gratitude."

"There'll be no fear of that: Emma will go to you with pleasure when she has faced everything and made comparisons; she's not insensible to you, Sir, and with the way clear you'll soon find her responsive as you wish."

"Then ye advise showing Mr. Greville's letter?"

"'Twill end foolishness and make Emma more agreeable to live with; she has not the nature of a nun, Sir!"

Sir William waited until Sunday morning, a holiday from lessons and practising. From the five pages written by Charles, the diplomat selected those that would best serve his purpose, and placed them without comment in Emma's hand. Her joyful cry evoked in him a spasm of vexation.

"Oh, my dear Sir Will'um, when did it come? Does it say I'm to go home?"

"'Twas not written for your eyes, Em; the letter will give you pain, but a sharp thrust is better than lingering torment."

Her face blanched and her lips trembled. "Then I'll take the blow alone, please, Sir Will'um."

When he had gone Emma walked to the double doors and manipulated a long rod on ratchets, which, when connected with the hasp, operated like a bolt. Returning to the covered balcony, she sat down to read:

"I always told her that I should always wish to contribute to make her happy, but that I knew she would not wish me to sacrifice every consideration which might be of use to me in life, and that what I told her the first day was likely to be repeated the last day, because there was nothing I did not foresee or could not foretell; and for her I pointed out Mrs. Wells, who had more than one friend, and was respected, and continued friendly with all.

And, after a first connexion has been broken, it is the line which will be most conducive to permanency for after the first connexion the crime of seduction becomes less weighty. It is justice. Extend the laws of rape to every woman, as well as to virgins, and seduction is equally a burthen to an honest mind which has given way to the passions. Therefore, I always have kept free from those reflections, by never having taken a woman from a better to a worse situation, and God knows there are more charming and unfortunate women than a man can set his face to, so general are seducers, and, as you know from some friends, so much are gallantries countenanced. It is not the opinion of the world but my own opinion I study, therefore I am anxious that appearances may be kept up, and you must meet the truth. I've all wish to be of use to each other, and it is very easily done by the arrangement you propose. It is only requisite for her to know that there is more dignity in living separate, and yet not to drop friendship, than to live together when every prudent reason shews that it is ruin to one or to both. Without any other plan she must wait events, and the difficulty will be to reject improper offers; but, at any rate, she will have the good sense not to expose herself with any boy of family; she must look to from 25 to 35, and one who is his own master"

As she read she felt herself growing cold as if slowly turning to stone; everything was finished, and this was death. She had no need to read the letter again: if she closed her eyes every neatly written word stood out blackly against a blood-red background. . . . Blood, flowing from her heart. . . . "A sharp thrust is better than lingering torment." . . . That's all Sir Will'um knew. . . . 'Twas the way they killed calves to make them white and tender. . . . A stab, and the blood flowed till the poor creatures became weaker and weaker. . . . A painless death, the butchers said. . . . That Greville should strike so sharp and true! How could he? God, how could he? . . . Poor Emma, who had never used him ill in any one thing. . . . Was there no mercy? . . . Was even the cold numbness of death to be denied? . . . Oh God, the pain, the pain! . . . Her heart, her whole body, was shattered and broke. . . .

For a long time she lay upon the floor; the chill of the marble paving penetrated the thin Persian rug, but she felt it not. Now and again she gasped, half raised herself, to fall back again as a long shudder shook her body. From a great way off sounded a tinny jangle of church bells, the mournful wail of bag-pipes playing Christmas hymns, the shouts of footmen running with a carriage, the cheerful twittering of Java sparrows, Richard Rumbold's Avadavats, happy in their cage.

At length Emma dragged herself to her knees and shuffled across to a tripod, holding a shallow brazier, full of fine red-hot charcoal covered smoothly with ashes. Unhooking an old key from the stand, she gingerly used the ring to expose a few embers, an operation demanding delicacy if the fire was to survive. Still kneeling, she held her numbed hands over the patch of glowing fuel; tears slowly rolled down her face to fall with gentle hisses upon the blanched ashes.

Greville had done with her; no doubt of that! Not only did he love her no more, but he mocked her and made a disparaging comparison with Mrs. Wells. . . . How dared he? . . . Emma might have no feelings, no heart. . . . Never, since they were lovers, had she acted false; he knew well the offers she had rejected, yet wrote as if she was easy as a harlot. . . . "She will have the good sense not to expose herself with any boy of family." . . . Greville spoke truer than he thought! . . . Never again would Emma drift where the current took her. . . . She'd steer a steady course to harbour. . . .

Reckless mismanagement of the brazier soon exhausted the fuel; little warmth was contributed by the shallow pan of charcoal, but the

large, bare room seemed infinitely colder when the red glow expired. Wrapped in her camel-shawl, Emma sat in the window looking out over the picturesque roofs and cupolas of Pizzofalcone to the bay tossing and foaming under the lash of a *scirocco*. Grey sky and green water presented as drear a spectacle as any English seascape in winter. Waves dashed against the escarpments of Castel dell' Uovo and broke in a white spate over the rocky shoal of Santa Lucia. Every fishing-boat had been dragged to safety; the only vessel to be seen was the packet-boat from Palermo, her sails gleaming against a squally background as she ran before the wind.

Through the courtyard gates raced a couple of footmen, shouting: "*Attendere! Attendere! Sua Eccellenza Conte di Connaught!*" The summons brought out ten of Sir William's servants to line the steps and Vincenzo, whose duty it was to receive important visitors. All bowed low as a carriage, emblazoned with the royal arms of England, drew up at the portico. The illustrious caller descended as alertly as disabilities allowed; at forty-three Prince William Henry had the corpulent figure that distinguished Britain's Hanoverian royalties and the gout which so frequently incommoded their august limbs. Like his brother, George III, he had a boldly shaped nose, full lips and slightly protruding eyes fringed with pale lashes. Incognito, as the Conte and Contessa di Connaught, the Duke of Gloucester and his Duchess were established in Naples for the winter.

The interest of watching His Royal Highness, and the excited reverence Emma felt for exalted personages, interrupted mournful pre-occupation; but when the Duke vanished behind the great doors and his carriage and cream horses disappeared through the stable arch, grief again was paramount. But with a difference: Emma began to think. During the long months of suspense, when hope fluctuated, she had lived from moment to moment, refusing to contemplate a future without Greville. Now her destiny was decided and presented two alternatives: to return to England and "look to from 25 to 35, and one who is his own master", or "to oblige Sir William". There was a third course: marriage. Difficult of accomplishment, but not impossible to a beautiful woman resolute to become a wife. Grimly, with eyes fixed on the stormy horizon, Emma assessed failings that must be overcome before she could aspire so high. Temper was her worst fault and the one to be most firmly subdued: for Sir William esteemed good temper more than beauty. . . .

Rising, she crossed the room to a coffer that contained her treas-

ures, and from it carried back to the window William Hayley's *The Triumphs of Temper*. Already she had derived much benefit from the lofty precepts elaborated in six cantos, by diligent study of Serena's progress through:

*"Scenes of mental strife,
Which form the maiden, for th'accomplish'd wife."*

and hoped to emulate the poet's mild heroine. Opening the little volume at random, Emma read:

*"And now, slow-riding on a tortoise' back,
Her features lifeless, and each fibre slack,
Full in their view the nymph Indifference came;
The quick SERENA soon perceiv'd her name,
For, as in solemn creeping state she rode,
In her lax hand she held fair GREVILLE's ode."*

Emma was startled by words so applicable to her own situation; Mr. Hayley had written the poem many years ago, yet he anticipated the present, even to Greville's name. . . . 'Twas a poet's vision, that's what it was, and it bore a message to a girl in need. . . . She'd learn the poem by heart, thankful to profit by guidance that led Serena to connubial bliss. . . .

At dinner-time Mrs. Cadogan came and rattled the door-knob; receiving no answer, she retired, to return again some ten minutes later.

"Emma! Emma! Are you inside?"

"Yes," came the listless response.

"What are you doing, gal? Dinner's been on the table this great while. There's a haunch of venison from the doe the King sent yesterday, and 'tis a dish that spoils by keeping."

"I want naught of it—all I wish is to be left alone."

"But, Emma, what's the matter? Are you ill? 'Tisn't like you to scorn a tasty dish. Come, gal, we're eating in our own apartment, for Sir Will'um's entertaining His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester."

"Oh go! Go! I tell you I want to be left in peace!"

Vexed and mortified, Mrs. Cadogan turned away; Emma listened to her footsteps pattering along the marble corridor, and to the sound of a door angrily closed.

She watched the Palermo packet-boat, with her sheets free, running for Porto Grande; she saw Sir William descending the steps to speed the royal guest; she witnessed the arrival of numerous English and Neapolitan callers who came to write their names in the large leather-bound volume embossed with the crown and cipher of King George III.

The courtyard had emptied when a procession of penitent prostitutes, conducted by a padre and a lay assistant, turned in at the gate. Walking bare-footed, two abreast, the penitents sang a mournful hymn as they slowly paced between the Judas trees. They wore violet cloth gowns girded with cords of the same colour; their heads were covered with blue veils so thin as to afford glimpses of alluring faces. Youth and beauty being found a powerful incentive to liberality, those sent a-begging were carefully chosen. At particular places they knelt and acknowledged past faults while a collection was made. More than thirty thousand registered courtesans lived in the quarter near Porta Capuana, thus the numbers quitting an abandoned life for a convent edified Naples with a daily procession.

The advent of the cavalcade at such a juncture caused superstitious Emma the utmost misgiving. She withdrew from the window, but not in time to escape the vigilance of the padre and his colleague. A red velvet bag, mounted on a tall wand, thumped peremptorily on the glass. In a panic to be rid of ill-omened visitors, Emma quickly ransacked her pockets; clutching five *carlini* and one *grano*, she flung open the casement; and looked down at a kneeling semi-circle of veiled women and into the upturned, pock-marked face of the *conduttore*. Baring long, yellow teeth in an ingratiating leer, he winked confidentially and slowly wagged his forefinger before his nose, a sign so significant that Emma could not miss its implication. Angrily flinging the money upon the ground, she slammed the window, and, hidden by the curtain, watched the grovelling women searching for the coins between the paving-stones. Daylight was diminishing, not fading smoothly as in England, but in jerks as if a shutter was turning on a ratchet. Into the gloom the procession retreated, the veiled women, pattering out of step, lurched and softly collided, the padre, shaped like a nine-pin in his round hat and long soutane, the *conduttore*, carrying across his shoulder his wand of office, vanished one by one into the darkness of Vico Santa Maria.

Twice Mrs. Cadogan came to the door, rattled the handle and demanded admittance. Emma made no sound. She could see nothing

inside the room, but the courtyard was partially revealed by cressets burning on either side of the portico. Ragged forms flitted from shadow to shadow; the eyes of a cat shone greenly phosphorescent; a running footman, bearing a torch, delivered a letter from a cleft stick. Away to the east a dense volume of smoke rolled from the crater of Vesuvius, vivid flames shot up and sank again, a lurid red light throbbled on the sky to be reflected dully in the sea.

Emma was faint for lack of food and stiff with cold, but she sat on in the window, too apathetic to terminate her vigil and face what must come. After a while her head sank against the woodwork and she dreamt that she stood upon the battlements of Castel dell' Uovo, throwing a rope to Greville drowning in the trough of green water; he missed the rope, and she saw him carried away to the foaming crest of another wave, which, rising higher and higher, dashed him against the steep escarpment. She awakened to the sound of the sea breaking over the rocks of Pizzofalcone and to her name being called by Sir William. Confused, she thought the voice was Greville's, and sprang up crying: "I'm coming, my dear, I'm coming!"

Stumbling to the double door, she fumbled with the difficult lock, sobbing because her numbed fingers would not do her bidding. With a cry of triumph she released the rod and rushed into the corridor.

Sir William and not Greville waited without. . . .

Silently he gathered her into his arms and rocked her gently, while she sobbed against his shoulder. "Oh, Sir Will'um, Sir Will'um, I'm all undone, but I'll be better soon! Indeed, 'tis the last of my foolishness, for I'm going to do all you wish with a grateful heart."

"Not with a loving one, Emma?"

In the darkness a look of anguish crossed her face, but she answered stoutly: "Aye, 'twill be a loving heart, too, Sir Will'um!"

He was shocked by the coldness of the room, and insisted upon an adjournment to the living-apartment. "I can promise warmth and comfort to-night, my dear; I see to it that my own quarters are kept snug with English fires—braziers do well enough for Neapolitans who are impervious to cold."

He talked cheerfully as he hurried Emma along the chilly stone corridor dimly lit by ancient bronze lamps suspended on chains from the groined roof. As they passed the *castrato* on duty outside the *garde-robe*, Sir William bade him hasten to the kitchens to order a wood-biddy to be put on the spit. "For I hear ye've had an all-day

fast, sweet Em; the soul is strengthened by fasting, but the heart thrives better on feasts!"

Mrs. Cadogan, with her feet upon a perforated brass box filled with wood embers, sat knitting Sir William a pair of shooting stockings by the light of a wax candle. She raised her head when the door opened, and bent upon her daughter a searching look; what she saw appeared to give her satisfaction. "You missed a treat this afternoon, Emma," she remarked in easy conversational tones: "the nuns from Santa Romita invited you to their *Presepe*, all set out for Christmas; and a more wonderful sight I never saw. There was the stable at Bethlehem, with our Saviour in the manger watched over by the Virgin and St. Joseph; and Angels flying above. But these I scarcely noticed, being taken up with a landscape showing a road past an inn, where peasants feasted, rising 'twixt rocks and a real river to a ruined temple. Painted figures, about six inches tall, dressed in Neapolitan costumes, were doing all manner of things; there were animals just like life and a horseman mounting a flight of steps. The scene is taken to pieces after Christmas and re-arranged in a different manner next year; the Mother-Superior said all the best families own *Presepi*, and this one cost fifteen hundred pounds English, and she brought it from her home when she took the veil."

Momentarily Emma's thoughts were deflected towards the interesting spectacle she had missed: "You might have told me we were invited, Mam."

"You said you wanted to be left in peace, gall"

Sir William hastily intervened: "Ye'll see many *Presepi*, Em; there is considerable rivalry among great families to possess the best figures, and much anxiety to exhibit them. The King sets up his on the palace roof, and very pretty it looks with Vesuvius and the bay as a background."

Emma felt much better for the wood-biddy and better still for a bumper of delicious, heady red wine which Sir William carried with his own hands from the cellars. "This wine is impiously named *lachrimæ Christi*, or the tears of Christ. 'Tis vinted on the slopes of Vesuvius and reserved for His Majesty, who makes presents of it to his friends." Exhilarated, Emma eagerly drank a second glass; nothing mattered any more—past, present, and future appeared roseate as the pink clouds of morning.

Mrs. Cadogan had slipped out of the room before Emma began her supper; returning some twenty minutes later, she whispered to

Sir William before crossing to her daughter. "I'll say good night now, Emma," she said, giving her a hug and warm kiss. "You'll find your things upstairs in the closet off His Excellency's chamber."

Emma's eyes were bright and her cheeks were flushed; for a moment she clung to her mother, then gently pushed her away saying: "Good night and thank you, Mam."

They were alone again. Noticing that the bracket clock had stopped, Sir William got up and jerked it sharply, treatment which caused it to strike interminably. By twirling the hands, he tried to stop the bell. "Devil take it," he muttered, abandoning the task. He walked jauntily up and down from door to window. "It has turned into a fine night, after all, Em; look at Venus hanging like a golden lamp over the bay of Baiæ."

She went and stood with him on the balcony. The storm had subsided into the wistful lip of waves lapping against rocks and the rustle of leaves stirring upon the cedrati trees. Here and there red lights gleamed through the darkness; lamps burning before shrines of the Virgin. Flambeaux, illuminating the *Presepe* on the roof of Palazzo Reale, rippled and fluttered like golden plumes; behind the coiling smoke of Vesuvius a waxing moon flooded with ashen radiance the grey tufa of *La Somma*.

Sir William put his arm round Emma and gently chafed her cold hand. "I know myself to be no match for youth and beauty, but I'll do my best to make you happy. Let us study to make one another as comfortable as we can, and 'banish sorrow till to-morrow', and so on every day."

"I'll be happy, Sir Will'um," Emma promised, offering her lips.

His kiss was long and passionate; he held her so close that the pattern of his Star of the Bath was impressed upon her bare bosom. "My darling, I love you, I love you."

"Do you, Sir Will'um?"

"I would I were the first to tell ye so!"

She nearly admitted that he *was*. . . .

"*'Omnia vincit amor, nos et cedamus amori'*," he whispered, urging her through the room where the clock still struck an endless procession of hours.

Emma hung back, pleading: "Let me stay alone a minute; I'll not keep you impatient—I can undress fast."

She watched him pass through the high walnut doors, a tall, distinguished figure, bronzed and lean as the boatmen of Santa Lucia.

Firm and alert his footsteps mounted the marble stairs and receded along the upper corridor; a door slammed.

When all was silent Emma went back to the table where the wine bottle stood beside her empty glass. Slowly she filled it to the brim with the beautiful blood-red wine, *lachrimæ Christi*—the tears of Christ. . . .

* * * * *

The following day was the *festa* of San Graziano. Though a lesser saint, he was accorded a fine explosion of fireworks which awakened Emma. For a minute she lay still, wondering at her new surroundings. The gilded bed faced a curving window that looked across the bay to Capri, a blue shadow on the magic haze of morning. Sea and sky merged in a flood of mother-of-pearl, brightly painted fishing-boats with goose-winged sails appeared to skim from one element to the other. Above the racket of *mortaletti* sounded a weird fanfare of conch-shells, the signal for hauling in the nets; Emma watched with interest until Sir William's lean brown hand was laid across her eyes.

"Bless the child, I believe she's forgotten where she is!"

Emma was silent, gathering her wits. "No, indeed, Sir Will'um, I remember everything!"

"Was I such an ogre?"

She looked at him earnestly. "You are kind and good; 'twill be a pleasure to love you and make you happy."

"Poor Em! you've cut your wisdom teeth. Now that painful process is over, I'll confess it caused me some twinges to watch you suffer!"

Vincenzo, bringing in the early morning chocolate, grinned with sympathetic pleasure to discover Emma in his master's bed. He lost no time in fetching a second cup and saucer. After he had gone Sir William said: "I think 'twould be less embarrassing if we decamped to Caserta for a few days; on our return the household would be prepared for the new régime. I own to some bashfulness in facing Cottier, who promised Lady Hamilton to serve me until the death of one of us released him. His loyalty to her memory prescribes for me perpetual chastity, an expectation I have found peculiarly irksome, so much so that I am only waiting a suitable opportunity to end his bondage."

"Give him a little pension, Sir Will'um."

"Unfortunately Cottier is independent. Lady Hamilton bought him

an annuity, adding six pounds a year for his promise to remain with me for life."

Emma laughed at Sir William's rueful expression. "I never supposed great gentlemen like you considered what their servants thought of them."

"My dear, it takes courage to fall short of high expectations, that is why a real blackguard rarely owns a dog."

Caserta, being a post-royal from Naples, meant three pairs of horses for Sir William's coach. Six running footmen preceded the vehicle to Porta Capuana, but neither their shouts nor their batons scattered the crowds. People of all ranks surged round the gilded, flower-decked stalls in the Toledo, laid out with ices, orgeats and sugar images of the Holy Child, the ass, the ox and the three kings. Garlands of orange and myrtle leaves festooned the street. Crackers exploded, sellers and buyers shouted and yelled; above the tumult rose the melancholy gurgle of bagpipes, played by the mountain minstrels from Abruzzo before the shrines of the Madonna. Every householder, protected and sanctified by the *Madre di Dio*, engaged a piper and flautist for the Christmas season. Wearing pointed caps, brown cloaks and leggings of buffalo hide above ancient sandals, the *zampognari* played their traditional *lamento*, indifferent to the music of rivals. Lest San Gennaro took umbrage, a merchant near Porta Capuana established pipers in the towers of *L'Onore* and *La Virtù*, to play before the saint's statue guarding the gate. As the coach left the city Emma heard the mournful hymn following like a sigh:

*"E nasciuto il Re del Cielo,
Che nel candido suo velo
Sulla terra calera."*

The British Minister's house at Caserta overlooked the palace grounds, and the principal façade of Vanvitelli's masterpiece, which in size and solidity almost surpassed any royal edifice in Europe. The palace begun by King Carlo in 1752 was finished, but not the park. On the afternoon of their arrival Sir William took Emma to see the English garden being constructed for Queen Carolina by John Græffer, a protégé of Sir Joseph Banks, who had landed at Naples a few days before Emma. Suave, loquacious and cherubic, the landscape-gardener had favourably impressed the British Minister, and through his kind offices was comfortably settled. "But I have left a sweetheart in England, so 'tis impossible to be altogether happy," Mr. Græffer

confided to Emma. "What is life without love, understanding and that true affinity of twin souls? Oh, Mrs. Hart, I cannot describe what parting from my sweet Carry meant to me."

"I know well the pain of separation, but you may count yourself lucky in having the future to look forward to."

"But, alas, my small salary renders marriage impossible for the next five years."

"He seems very fond of his sweetheart," Emma remarked as she walked with Sir William towards the cascades.

"So much so that I soft-heartedly offered to lend him twenty guineas to bring the girl here."

Emma was rendered speechless by the beauty of the artificial waterfalls, arranged to form a combination of fountains, statues and deep basins, culminating in a grand cascade representing the story of Diana and Actæon. Following Sir William, she climbed a serpentine path to the terrace and looked down the steps of tumbling water to the palace, standing in the midst of a formal garden. Built of travertine from quarries near Capua, the massive building represented the richest style of Italian architecture. From their elevated position they could see four courts forming a cross within the building, and the gigantic range of the north façade.

"Bolder and greater projections, massive towers or arcades would have shown this vast building to more advantage," said Sir William—"five storeys, each of thirty-seven windows, give too much the idea of a monastery."

"What does the King want with a palace large enough to accommodate an army?"

"It satisfies his royal dignity, but Ferdinando had no part in building Caserta, which, like the palaces of Capodimonte and Portici, owes its existence to the Infante Don Carlos' passion for the chase."

"In that this King resembles his father?"

"Yes, my dear, and very soon I shall have to join in the wholesale carnage with which His Majesty diverts himself between Christmas and Carnival. Our first *chasse* usually takes place in yonder forest rising behind the *Casino*."

"Do all the Ambassadors shoot with the King?"

"No, indeed. I am especially favoured, for I assure you I shoot well, and for that reason I am a great man in His Sicilian Majesty's estimation."

"But is that kind of hunting safe, Sir Will'um?"

"There's more than a spice of danger in't. At Perano and Venafo the boars are enormous and very fierce, which makes it necessary for us to be entrenched, for if they do not fall on being wounded they come directly upon one; generally some men are hurt and numberless dogs killed."

Emma began to cry. Since Greville's default her tears brimmed over on slight provocation. Sir William, believing they were shed for himself, was immensely flattered. Taking her in his arms, he kissed her ardently. "My lovely girl, now you await me I shall take no unnecessary risk. Here at Caserta the boars are comparatively tame, being kept in preserves until they are hunted."

Emma found it easier than she expected to respond to Sir William's love-making. After the long struggle to avert the inevitable it was a relief to yield. Wisely he allowed her no time for thought; the season being blessed with a fine, mild weather, they were able to drive to the ruined amphitheatre at Santa Maria di Capua and to the ancient necropolis which had supplied the British Minister with some of his best vases. He took her to Ferdinando's farm, the Casino Reale di Carditello, where a wood formed a reserved chase of wild boar.

"How many hunting-lodges does the King own?" Emma asked in wonderment.

"I believe over forty in different parts of the kingdom, but not all are kept up."

Caserta was deserted. The King was shortly expected at San Leucio, his hunting-seat on the borders of the forest, but the Court would not arrive before the end of Carnival. Only the painters, Don Andrea and Philip Hackert, were to be seen, walking briskly in voluminous cloaks and broad-brimmed hats, followed by peasants carrying easels, canvases and camp-stools. At night the artists repaired to the British Minister's house to hear Emma sing to Sir William's accompaniment on the viola. Her voice had greatly improved under Galluci's tuition and she was able to sing in Italian songs from *La Pupilla* and *L'Idolo Cinese*. It was fortunate that her two elderly admirers were staying until the New Year, as Sir William was recalled to Naples immediately after Christmas to deal with urgent dispatches. With real distress Emma saw him go; his discernment, compassion and skilful wooing had made an impression on her wounded heart. Nobody could take the place of Greville, never again could she love with disinterested simple passion, but affection and gratitude she had at her command; both she gave freely to her elderly protector. If she falsely

described what she had to offer, 'twas from necessity, not from choice. . . .

To keep herself warm in his memory she dispatched a letter each day by post-groom, who brought back a return *billet doux*. Sir William's epistles were brief but ardent, Emma's lengthier compositions painstakingly expressed sentiments that she hoped would develop if carefully nurtured.

"Love as its pleasures & its pains;" she wrote, "for instance, yesterday when you went a whey from me, I thought all my heart and soul was torn from me, and my grief was excessive I assure you; to-day I am better, perche² the day after to moro is friday & then I shall have you with me to make up for past pain. I shall have much pleasure and comfort, and my mind tells me you will have much pleasure to come home to me again, & I will settle you and comfort you. . . ."

Many sheets of Sir William's costly writing-paper were spoiled, yet the results left Emma far from satisfied. In trying to make herself appear valuable she sounded complacent. . . . And God knew how far from the truth that was! . . .

Sir William returned a day later than he expected, much provoked because the King had changed his plans. "He now decides our first *chasse* is to be at Persano, which is fifty miles from Naples. Messengers will pass constantly to and fro, but I shall be a prisoner in the royal hunting-ground for three weeks."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, and do I stay here?"

"No, no, my dear Em: on New Year's Day we'll go back together to Naples; there you must amuse yourself as well as you can while we are separate."

The hunters set forth on the 3rd of January. Emma and her mother rose early to watch the cavalcade from the steps of San Paolo Maggiore. It was a frosty morning, pale stars spangled a cold, cerulean sky high above the campanile of San Lorenzo. A lantern, placed by Mrs. Cadogan on the church steps, cast a circle of mellow light upon a pair of fine Corinthian columns from the temple of Castor and Pollux incorporated in the façade, and illuminated a bronze effigy of San Gaetanino and two mutilated marble torsos of divinities, present and past patrons of the site.

Strada dei Tribunali was black as a deep canyon; hurrying women servants, carrying little earthen pipkins filled with fire, crossed the

lamplight and vanished; cringing dogs darted from gloom to gloom; a man walked past bound for Campo Santo dei Poveri, bearing on his back a naked boy drooping over the top of a corpse basket. Five goats, straddling heavy udders, came to a standstill to stare at the lantern; behind them, against the wall of San Lorenzo, stretched a frieze of Satyrs' heads in shadowgraph.

The approach of the King and his retinue could be heard long before the glare of flambeaux illuminated the monastery of San Pietro a Maiella. Ferdinando's chosen guard of *Liparotti* led the cavalcade; immediately after rode His Majesty and his guests; huntsmen, and covered carts filled with barking dogs, brought up the rear. Pulsing torchlight shone upon Sir William riding beside his host; it revealed the King's coarse, heavy face and excessively large Bourbon nose. The British Minister wore a coat of the Windsor colours—blue and gold turned up with scarlet—spatterdashes and white buckskin breeches; Ferdinando's dress was a loose green leather jerkin belted with red morocco, long riding-boots and a small green hat ornamented with cocks' feathers. The clear, cold air carried the King's voice, raised to the treble key which it attained in moments of excitement or pleasure: "*Senza adulazione, avete sparato come un Angelo. . .*"

Sir William paid little attention to the compliment, having caught sight of Emma and her mother watching from the church steps. Turning in his saddle, he took off his tricorne and waved it. The King, looking in the same direction, uncovered his immaculately powdered wig, and bowed with great deference; an amorous gleam lit his dark, heavy-lidded eyes. Following the example of royalty, every nobleman in the retinue removed his hat and bowed as he passed. Accompanied by its own tumult, the cavalcade clattered toward the Vicaria; as distance increased, so the torch-flames fused one into another, forming fiery streamers that rippled behind the trotting horses.

Stooping, Mrs. Cadogan recovered her lantern. "You'll need to be cautious over the King, Emma," she remarked as she led the way down the steps and turned westward. "I had it from Caterina, the needlewoman, that the Queen has a deal of trouble with Ferdinando over actresses at San Carlo, and a while ago an Irishwoman called Sarah Goudar, who kept a gaming-house at Posilipo, was sent out of the country, and her villa confiscated, because she struck his eye."

"The Queen was sensible to act so firm."

"She knows how to guard her interests, therefore mind how you behave. You've a difficult path before you, and a false step means ruin. Don't look at any man but Sir Will'um, gal; study him and make him comfortable. Remember that elderly gentlemen value good humour and consideration more than beauty; if you depend only on your looks and cleverness, you'll never be My Lady."

"I mean to go careful, to improve myself every way and triumph over my temper, as Serena did."

"'Tis easier said than done, for you'll find much to rile you, and your passions generally get the mastery."

Grimly determined, Emma worked as she had never worked before; ambition took the place of love. When her thoughts strayed to Greville and Edgware Row, she had recourse to Aprile's system of *solfeggi* or Baretto's *Grammar of the Italian Tongue*, which, if they failed to stifle the ache at her heart, proved at least an anodyne. Galluci was delighted with her progress and predicted fame surpassing Elizabeth Billington's. In musical and diplomatic circles Emma's voice was as much discussed as her beauty; rivalry manifested itself among elderly *virtuosi* who visited Palazzo Sessa; Philip Hackert gave a party for her at his apartments in Palazzo Francavilla, and by way of entertainment displayed a sable-lined pelisse presented to him by the eccentric Russian Envoy, Count Paul Skavronsky. Emma dined and sang at the house of Hart, the blind musician, where she met the Abbé Campbell, chaplain to the Neapolitan Embassy in England, a genial, romantic soul who appeared as much bewitched as Emma's secular admirers. To Sir William she wrote a naive account of the party:

"They was all very polite, and such a profusion of diner that it is impossible to describe. I sett next to Hart, who would help me to every thing, and poor man could not see, but to the best of his power paid me a number of compliments, and produced me as a specimen of English beauty. After diner he fetched an Italian song, that was made on Lady Sophi Ferner fourty years past, and he had translated it to English and would sing it; and when he came to dymond eyes and pearl teeth, he looked at me and bid the others look at me; and he is going to dedicate the English to me, and oh! you can't think, just as if he could see me as if I was the most perfect beauty in the world. Endead, I heard the Abbé say to the others I was perfectly

beautiful and elegantly behaved in my manners and conversation. And so they all admired me. But Hart is quite gone. . . .”

Emma's beaux kept her posted in current gossip, which she duly retailed to the exile at Persano. The Cavaliere Gatti, the Grand Duke of Tuscany's physician, a guest at the Court of Naples, reported Carolina's opinion of the Duchess of Gloucester, Sir Edward Walpole's illegitimate daughter, whose arrogance and free speech found no favour with a Hapsburg autocrat. Emma, always in sympathy with royalty, added her own scathing comments on the upstart's imprudence:

“I don't wonder the Q. does not like her; for a woman of the queen's sence and understanding to see her behave so proud, and when she did speak to speak such stuff, I don't wonder at her not liking her.”

Censure on the consort of the Royal Duke was balm to Emma's pride. Although she was accepted by several Neapolitan noblewomen and accorded distant courtesies by the wives of the Austrian and Spanish Ministers, she was ignored by the travelling English who importuned the British Envoy. Ladies of no importance drew aside when she promenaded on Sir William's arm in Villa Reale; Lady Lanesborough, whose debts and excesses were the talk of Naples, had turned her back on Mrs. Hart's curtsy. To Mrs. Cadogan Emma indignantly confided: “Were it not for Serena's good example, my girdle would bust with my rage, so it would!”

An invitation from Beatrice Acquaviva, Abbess of the Convent of Santa Romita, did much to restore self-esteem. In their religious zeal and mettlesome behaviour, the family of Acquaviva had distinguished themselves under the Spanish Viceroys, and as Knights of Malta many representatives of the family had sacrificed their lives for God and Our Lady.

Emma was received by Donna Beatrice d'Acquaviva in a small room lined with paintings of suffering martyrs by José Ribera and a life-sized picture of the Crucifixion by Murillo. Old chairs and chests covered with Spanish leather, a carved table gilded and painted, a *trípico español* in lieu of a screen, provided a bizarre setting for the Reverend Mother. Dressed in a black velvet habit and gauze veil, Beatrice Acquaviva sat with her dainty feet on a perforated brass box filled with wood embers and held her bejewelled hands in

a large sable muff. Springing up to greet Emma, she skipped nimbly over the foot-warmer. "They spoke less than truth," she cried. "We may read your heart in your countenance; your complexion, hair, figure and features is rare, for you are like the marble statues I saw when I was in the world." Kissing Emma on each cheek, she led her to a chair, and raising her voice, shouted for another *caldanuzzo*. With her own hands she placed the brazier in position. "Warm yourself, for I vow it can be no colder in Inghilterra, where I'm told you burn *carbone fossile* to keep yourselves warm and thereby get the consumptions. Before I took the veil, there was a young *milord inglese*, who came to Napoli hoping to be cured, but he died. Oh, Emma, I loved him, I loved him to my heart!" Her large, soft eyes swam with tears. Emma nearly wept in sympathy; she was bewitched by the lovely young nun who spoke so flatteringly and like a friend.

"Is that why you hid yourself from the world?" she asked.

"*Può essere*," answered Beatrice Acquaviva.

"I wonder the men of Naples suffered the only pretty woman, who is really pretty, to be shut in a convent. I daresay thousands of tears were shed the day you deprived the city of its greatest ornament."

The nun sighed. "Indeed numbers of tears *was* shed, and once or twice my resolution was almost shook, but I had recourse to prayer and my mind was strengthened and I parted with the world with pleasure. Since that time one of my sisters has followed my example, and another is preparing to enter. Now it matters no more, for I am old—would you believe it, Emma? I am twenty-nine!"

"In April I shall be twenty-two, not so far behind," she consoled.

Leaning forward, the nun impulsively kissed Emma's cheeks, forehead and lips. "Now, it would be worth while to live for such a one as you. Till now I've never met a friend I could love, but your true heart would melt at any trouble that might befall me."

"Indeed I'd be happy to give you my friendship, for you are the first good and amiable woman I have met since I came to Naples."

"Oh, Emma, you are so different from all the others. They brought here to see me the Vienne Minister's wife; she was little, short and pinched-faced. Now, you look like an angel, and I hear you are good to the poor and generous and noble-minded."

In writing of the visit afterwards to Sir William, Emma said: "I think she flattered me up, but I was pleased."

Thenceforth Emma was a welcome visitor at Santa Romita; when she chose she dined with the community of noble dames, who prided

themselves on their good fare. The nuns taught her to appreciate raw ham eaten with figs green on the outside and crimson within, grown on the slopes of Vesuvius, and eels from the Lucrine Lake stewed with velvet mussels from Taranto. On the day that a wild boar was received from the King, both Emma and her mother were invited to the feast.

Every evening a train of fifty mules arrived from Persano, bringing boars, stags, does, porcupines and a variety of wild fowl to be distributed among the Court circle. Sir William wrote daily, and occasionally sent a present of woodcocks; only on the last day of the *chasse* did Ferdinando permit his guests to keep all that they killed.

"Yesterday," scribbled the Envoy, "the slaughter of wild boars, deer and stags of every kind exceeds belief. The King rarely missed a shot, but growing tired of killing, commenced another operation. Having first stripped, he put on a flannel dress, and, taking a knife, started to dissect the principal pieces of game. No carcase butcher in Smithfield could exceed him in anatomical ability; before he had finished he was besmeared with blood from head to foot and exhibited an extraordinary spectacle. Afterwards the walls of the house had to be whitewashed. On Saturday we return. Adieu, my sweet love! adieu. *O che Gusto!* I shall soon be at you again. Ever your's, *W.H.*"

On the morning of Sir William's return Emma was so restless and inattentive that Galluci irritably terminated the lesson, leaving her with an hour to spare before a sitting to Donna Coletalino, who was painting a miniature for Sir William's snuff-box. The artist's orders were to veil Emma's charms in a manner suggestive of beauties concealed, an illusion to be fostered by framing the portrait inside the box lid. In order to warm herself for the ordeal of sitting half-clad, Emma decided to take a brisk walk along the Chiaia. It was the 27th of January, and cold as a winter's day in Cheshire; snow covered the top of Vesuvius and a biting S.E. wind whipped the thin garments of the poor about their shivering limbs. Emma passed many English, marching briskly for health along the Marina, and a few venturesome Neapolitan gentlemen, peering over the tops of enormous muffs. At the end of a mile the Villa gardens and the lava pavement gave place to a stony road dipping down to the shore: the drying-ground of washer-women who lived in miserable dwellings that superseded

the splendid white palaces of the Chiaia. Mrs. Cadogan and her daughter had many friends in Mergellina, and Emma was quickly surrounded by lounging, unkempt girls turning their spindles in dirty, chilblained fingers, by nearly naked children and savage-looking men clothed in sacking and rags. Wide-arched doors, open to admit light and air, revealed dirty, vaulted dens, and all the family arrangements, showed, too, washer-women kneeling on the ground laundering with irons heated over small charcoal braziers fanned to a glow. Emma, hearing her name called, crossed the threshold of Gabriella Carafa, who with her widowed daughter had been in the royal service and was still favoured with the Queen's patronage. Both women were idle; the brazier was dulled by ashes, the wooden tubs were empty and upside down; in the clothes-basket lay Elvira, Gabriella's grandchild, so changed that Emma would not have known her but for the silver rings in her ears. Elvira's small olive face was swollen and covered with pitted vesicles surrounded by inflamed circles that imparted a deep rose colour to the unblemished skin; her bright black eyes were closed by pustules clustered on her lids. Tossing from side to side, she cried out and rolled her head away from the milk which her mother was trying to force into her mouth with a large brass spoon.

Gabriella's heavy, lined face was set. "*Il vajuolo*," she calmly stated.

"No, no, no!" shrieked her daughter.

"*Eccellenza*, it is as I say. Very bad to lose the *bambino* from the small-pox, but we are ruined if we endanger the royal family. This morning the Queen drives to Mergellina, bringing a gift for the *bambino* on her name-day; *Eccellenza*, you must stop Her Majesty and save two poor widows from punishment."

"But I can't hold up the Queen!" Emma demurred. "Even to deliver your message at the palace would be difficult."

"Her Majesty will be on her way, *Signora*; if she comes near the small-pox, it will be a dungeon in the Vicaria for us. You have a good heart, and the face of the Madonna; how, therefore, can you refuse to help? Go, quickly, *Eccellenza*, go with a poor widow's blessing."

Emma found herself racing along the Chiaia, meeting the cold blast of a south-east wind tearing across the bay. The English, promenading for health, sought shelter in Villa Reale; Neapolitans had retired indoors; only a few goats pattered stoically along the lava pavement. From a distance Queen Carolina's britzka was easily recognized by the crown on the top and the crimson feathers worn on the caps

of the running footmen. Elated by her dramatic mission, Emma rushed at the foremost *volante* and peremptorily shouted: "*Alto!*"

Grasping his dagger, the footman swung round ready to strike, but Emma shot past and barred the way to the oncoming carriage. The postilions brought up the horses; the Queen and Princess Maria Theresa peered with startled faces through the glass; Carolina's expression darkened. Letting down the window, she angrily ordered her servants to drive on. Again Emma was too quick. Standing by the step she looked up disarmingly. "Forgive me," she panted, "but there was no other way. At Mergellina they have the small-pox, Gabriella Carafa's grandchild has the blisters all out, and if you go near you'll get it, sure. Pray, Marm, say naught to Sir Will'um of my boldness in stopping you!"

Enjoying her adventure, Emma watched the effect of her words; dismay was succeeded by relief, royal dignity gave place to gratitude. "Thank God you acted as you did," said the Queen feelingly; "but you, *Signora*, do you not fear infection?"

"Oh no, Marm," Emma answered serenely. "I had the cow-pox as a young maid, and it has never been known for anyone to get the small-pox after."

"I trust you're not mistaken; and I thank you, *Signora*, for your prompt action." Bowing graciously, the Queen signalled to the postilions and closed the window.

Emma stood watching the carriage turn to drive back along the Chiaia. Clutching their plumed caps, the footmen ran into the wind; bending low, they presented a queer spectacle of running legs surmounted by tossing feathers. Presently the handsome promenade was deserted save for Emma, who found vent for exultation by childishly skipping as she walked towards Naples. What more had fortune to offer? Emma Hart had been thanked by a Queen! . . .



CHAPTER FOUR

THE summer of 1787 found Emma confidently taking part in the gay, easy-going society of Naples. Her beauty, coupled with Sir William's popularity, had broken down all but the barriers round the Palazzo Reale; only the English remained aloof, despite a triumphant appearance with the Duke of Gloucester in the Villa gardens. Daily she improved in looks, voice and accomplishments; she discovered a new talent and delighted Sir William by making sketches of Vesuvius from his casino at Posilipo, flatteringly renamed Villa Emma.

An invitation to Sorrento from the Duc de Saint Maître provided her first opportunity to shine in a wide sphere. Accompanied by Sir William, Galluci and a band of musicians, Emma made the journey in the long-boat, rowed by twelve men dressed like British seamen. The Duc spared no pains to make the visit agreeable: bathing and boating parties were organized, sure-footed asses transported his guests to places of interest; in the evenings Emma received the nobility who came to hear her sing. On Sir William's advice she confined her performances to a couple of serious songs and two *buffos*; only on the last night did she yield to persuasion. The room was crowded with men and women of rank, perspiring in costly, tight clothes. Pomatum trickling down oily, dark faces added a smell of lard and rose-water to the stench of sweat and hot tallow that floated up to Emma standing on a dais. From her elevation she could look out through a vine-clad colonnade to Capo di Sorrento and the rippling track of the moon on the water. Her glorious soprano ringing through the room reached some fishermen trolling near the Caves of Ulysses.

*"Rassereni amico amore,
La mia smania, il mio terrore;
Un delitto amar non è. . ."*

Their voices answered from the bay:

*"Rassereni amico amore,
La mia smania, il mio terrore;
Un delitto un delitto amar non è
Rassereni amico amore. . . ."*

Her recital extended to fifteen songs, and ended with a recitative from a new opera at San Carlo, which occasioned such tumultuous applause that she was obliged to sing it over again.

Flushed with triumph, and leaning on Sir William, she descended the shallow marble steps, to be mobbed by the enraptured audience. Fine ladies, overcome by emotion, kissed her and declared themselves loving friends; they vowed they had never heard Italian so beautifully spoken, and said "the Banti was now but a satellite to a constellation." Noblemen offered themselves as *cavalieri serventi*, the Marchese di Gallo, calling her "*una donna rara*", asked if she had left a love at Naples, that she returned so soon.

Saucily Emma pulled her lip. "Pray do you take me to be an Italian woman, that has four or five different men to attend her? Look, Sir, I am English. I have but one *cavaliere servente*, and I have brought him with me." She pointed to Sir William.

Affronted, the Marchese turned away, ogling as he did so pretty Luigia Sanfelice, who, though only thirteen, was reputed to have had a lover.

In July Vesuvius became extremely active. Sir William was constantly up the mountain; on the night of the full moon Emma's pleading prevailed, and she found herself mounted on a shaggy ass, which nimbly trotted through the vineyards into the region of lava in the wake of Sir William and the guide Bartolomeo. As they climbed, so the torch they carried was eclipsed by the glow of red-hot scorix and flames from trees and brushwood ablaze down the mountain side. The night was alive with sounds of steam hissing from knots and branches as the trees were engulfed, with squeals of animals and the deep throb of the mountain beating like a labouring heart. As vineyards were left behind, a barren lava desert, ridged, cracked and folded back upon itself, was revealed by the red glare of fiery cascades pouring from the crater. Suddenly, with a loud explosion, stones, scorix and ashes shot high into the air, accompanied by volumes of white smoke which, rolling towards Fosso Grande, obscured everything in acrid, sulphurous vapour.

Half choked, Emma blindly followed Bartolomeo, who clung to the tail of Sir William's donkey. Upon the smoke dispersing she found they had reached the Hermitage, a shelter and a shrine built of tufa by Alexandre Sauveur, who was reputed to have sought the dangerous solitude of a volcano as an antidote to a hopeless passion for the Princess of Prussia. Many times his cabin had been threatened, as was testified by little crosses marking where molten streams had stopped short.

Leaving the donkeys by the shrine, Emma and Sir William followed the guide on foot, and presently found the Hermit keeping pace with a flow of lava going in the direction of his cell; so great was the heat it cast upon his bare feet that he was perpetually leaping from the ground like a victim of a tarantula. Gaunt and yellow, the Hermit was dressed in a ragged brown robe and hood which, falling back from his head, revealed dirty white hair incongruously elevated and frizzed after the extravagant mode of the 'sixties. Piously confident that an abundance of holy pictures and images would preserve his shelter from destruction, he watched undismayed the wide mass of lava slowly advancing in thick folds which continually overtook and covered those beneath. The molten stream carried on its surface transparent, red-hot stones, gleaming like rubies, and large, half-lighted cinders emitting blue flames.

Emma was enchanted. "Oh, Sir Will'um," she cried, "I would we could stay here all night, for never in my life have I seen anything so fine. See! The moon is all lit up by the lava; 'tis like in *Revelations*: '*And lo there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the sun became as blood.*'"

"My dear Em, the longer I observe Vesuvius the less I comprehend the wonders in this great laboratory of Nature."

The Hermit eagerly intervened: "*J'ai dansé dans mon lit tant de fois.*"

"Don't you ever feel lonely?" Emma inquired.

"*Non! non!* All the world comes up here sooner or later. You'd be surprised how many of my old clients climb to my cabin; though most have forgotten me, I have not forgotten *them*. Do you know Mrs. Thrale? 'Tis not many moons since she was up here. 'Did I never see you before, Madame?' said I. 'Yes, sure I have, and dressed you, too, when I was a hairdresser in London, working for Monsieur Martinant. I was younger then; now I am old—I remember when black pins first came up.'"

As the Hermit talked garrulously to Emma, Sir William and Bartolomeo walked out on to the lava to test its gravity; the crust was so tough that their weight made not the least impression; the daring exploit caused no injury other than severe heat upon their legs and feet. Presently the stream advanced to within thirty yards of the Hermitage, and Sir William deemed it time to lead the donkeys farther down the mountain. Together Emma and Alexandre Sauveur watched the lava flowing towards the chapel. One by one the little crosses recording miraculous interventions slanted, fell and were submerged. Crackling and hissing, the molten tide came on in thick, treachery, folds until the tiny building was surrounded. Bravely the old Frenchman attempted to cross the fiery cascade, but leapt back in anguish.

"You can't do it without thick boots," Emma assured him. "Sir Will'um had a pair made for me o' purpose. Look!" she cried, "I can walk on the lava and feel naught but hot fumes."

Wringing his hands, the Hermit looked pitifully towards his tiny chapel. "I will build a new oratory, but I cannot replace Holy Mary and the Blessed Martyrs that cost ten francs in the Rue St. Honoré." Invoking the aid of St. Laurence, he made another attempt to cross the lava, and recoiled as before.

Emma looked dubiously from the red-hot stones and flaming cinders to the Hermit's distressed face. Thirty feet separated her from the chapel, thirty feet of fire hot enough to burn a Christian, let alone Emma Hart. . . . But there'd be no heroism if heroes considered before acting. . . .

In a trice she was safely across and feeling in the darkness of the sulphur-filled oratory. The images were small—no larger than a month-old baby. Clutching them in her arms, she paused a moment on the rough-hewn step. The volcano had just thrown up a fountain of transparent flame which illuminated the country for many miles. Far away to the north-west the islands of Procida and Ischia stood out blackly from a sea of gold; to the south the pulsing glare revealed every detail of the coast to Sorrento and capped with burnished crowns the three peaks of Capri. The effect in the immediate vicinity was to rob the flowing lava of its fierce aspect; the stream was no longer red, but ashen white, flecked with feeble flames. This was fortunate for Emma, whose courage was beginning to fail. It was one thing to rush a fiery river unencumbered, another to cross burdened by three holy statues. Gingerly she stepped down upon the gently

heaving, molten mass. In a moment the soles of her boots felt red hot, her legs were scorched as if lapped in flame; fear possessed her, but she dared not yield. On she must go, or burn like the souls in purgatory on wayside shrines. . . .

A few steps and the Madonna began to slip; she gave it a hitch with her knee, and nearly lost her balance. Halfway over it slid again. This time she could not save it. Toppling on its face, the image cracked on a piece of rock. Her load lightened, Emma hastened, and touched solid lava just as her boots were beginning to smoulder. Gingerly she set down the images. The pulsing light of the flames shone upon them; she stared, trying to capture an elusive memory. St. Ephesus and St. Potitus gazed back with glassy eyes. In a flash Emma was back in Lincoln's Inn Fields, helping the rioters to sack the Sardinian Embassy.

"Last time 'twas the Madonna that came through, till John Glover smashed her with a bullet."

Alexandre Sauveur, kneeling, looked up with uncomprehending eyes. "What matters it that a plaster statue is lost, when you are a living image of Our Lady?" Raising the hem of her singed skirt, he carried it to his lips.

Thus Sir William found them. Consolingly he patted the Frenchman's arm. "The mountain has paid ye a shabby trick, but your bed is saved, though I vow I know not how ye'll reach it. In your place I'd have rescued my mattress before *virtù*."

With a gesture the kneeling man pointed to Emma's burnt garments.

"My God, Em, you've not risked your life for those images?"

"'Twas no risk—walking on hot lava is as easy as A.B.C. if you only know the way," she boasted.

"One day you'll pay for your recklessness." Sir William, yielding to no entreaties, obliged Emma to leave the unfortunate Hermit and rejoin Bartolomeo waiting with the donkeys. "You don't resemble the Prince Royal's tutors, whom I just met hurrying him back to Portici without allowing him to glimpse anything more dangerous than the lava glow. When I asked the poor boy how he liked the eruption, he answered: '*Bello, ma poca roba*.'"

Emma was not invited to re-visit Vesuvius; she wisely concealed disappointment and appeared smiling and good-humoured to her generous protector, spending lavishly to make her happy. Her old apartments at Palazzo Sessa had been converted into music-rooms

and a studio fitted up expressly for the numerous artists from Rome wishful to paint the English beauty. The house at Caserta was re-decorated in elegant style, and a concert-room and quarters for Galluci were under construction.

At the end of a nine days' stay with the hospitable Countess Mahoney at her island home, Emma complacently confided: "Sir Wil'lum says he loves nothing but me, likes no person to sing but me, and takes delight in all I say and do."

The voyage to Ischia had been made in a Maltese *speronara*, a vessel large enough to accommodate all Sir William's musicians, Galluci, a harpsichord, four men-servants and a maid. Emma had repeated the triumph scored at Sorrento. She conversed easily in Italian and aired her French; everyone was bewitched by the *bellissima creatura*. The Countess secured several singers for a concert at Villa Rivaz, but Emma won all the applause and for ten minutes not a word could be heard. She sang two rondos, a *duetto* with Galluci, a *bravura* from an opera at San Carlo, and finally, in response to cries of "*Da capo!*" a simple air of Terra di Lavoro, so sweetly that her susceptible audience was overcome. The priest from Santa Restituta wept openly and was so enraptured that Sir William gave the old man a snuff-box with Emma's picture in the lid.

Falling deeper in love, Sir William felt delighted that his admiration was endorsed. A greater tribute to sound judgment was forthcoming in the early autumn, when Sir John Gallini and his brother-in-law, Lord Abingdon, joint proprietors of the Hanover Square Rooms, heard Emma sing and offered an engagement. The proposal was under discussion when Paisiello gave an *accademia* of music for his friend, Francesco Mancinelli, *impresario* of the Italian opera at Madrid. During the evening Emma sang a *bravura*, a *buffo* and a pathetic song. The following day Mancinelli submitted a three years' contract as *prima donna* at six thousand pounds. Wildly excited, Emma talked of little else, but reached no decision until Sir William intervened: "My dearest girl, would you so readily leave me, who dote upon you, to go to Spain, where you could not speak and would know no one?"

"That I wouldn't," she stoutly replied.

"Then, my love, you had better answer Mancinelli to that effect and allow your laurels to fall on the brow of fat Signora Pastorella, who grows yellow with envy."

"'Tis the only chance she'll get, poor thing, for her voice is as

little manageable as if she had sung all her life only by ear and without teaching."

"You're right, Em, as usual. Pastorella has all the abilities for a great singer, yet is worse than a small one. *A propos*, you would score by training longer before accepting any engagement. I was discussing the matter with Gallini, and he offers to make a subscription concert if you do not engage for opera. In eighteen months we shall be visiting England, and I should have no objection to your appearing at the Pantheon or at Hanover Square providing the fee was two thousand pounds."

"Did Gallini agree?"

"He was delighted, especially when I told him your training would continue under Aprile."

Emma discovered that prestige increased when talents could be assessed in sterling. Her social circle grew in size and importance. The fabulously rich Russian Minister, Count Paul Skavronsky, so musical that his servants must address him in recitative, composed an *Aria d' Abilità* which she was invited to perform at his house to a distinguished assembly. Through the Count, Emma's fame travelled to Russia and Potemkin, who immediately ordered for his royal mistress a picture of Signora Hart.

Triumph followed triumph. Emma was the wonder of Naples; flowers were thrown into her carriage; poor women held up their children to see "*La Eccellenza*, whose face is as the Blessed Virgin's".

She was happy—not spontaneously joyous in the old way, but in a manner muted by experience. If thoughts of past rapture disturbed her peace, she resolutely recalled the present. "What a happy creature is your Emma!" she told Sir William, "me that had no friend, no protector, nobody that I could trust, and now to be the friend, the Emma, of Sir Will'um Hamilton!"

Finding that yearning tenderness was not so easily to be crushed, she sought an outlet in a journal-like letter, written to Greville as he suggested: "on the footing of a friend".

"Alltho' you never think me worth writing to, yet I cannot so easily forget you, and whenever I have had any particular pleasure, I feil as tho I was not right till I had communicated it to my dearest Greville. For you will ever be dear to me, and tho' we cannot be together, lett ous corespond as freinds. I have a happiness in hearing from you, and a comfort in communicating my little storeys to you,

because I flatter myself that you still love the name of that Emma, that was once very dear to you, and, but for unfortunate evils, might still have claimed the first place in your affections. . . .”

The letter was compiled bit by bit and kept under lock and key for fear Mrs. Cadogan found it and “spoke her mind”. Time, which had softened Emma’s pain and indignation, had no such soothing effect upon her mother’s feelings. “Mr. Charles is so proud and heartless,” the Welshwoman asserted, “and such a schemer that he’ll overreach himself. Remember what I say, gal; he’ll never get the heiress he’s been trying so long to wed. Thirty-eight he was last May, and no prospects save through Sir Will’um. Thank God,” she added, “His Excellency is not too old to breed a family by a young wife.”

Emma was gladdened by her mother’s opinion. So long as Greville remained unwed the link that had bound them was not completely severed. Never again could they be lovers, yet friends they still might be. . . .

That Greville was equally anxious to establish good relations was proved by the arrival of a peace offering delivered by Captain Finch, whose frigate Sir William espied in the bay at sunrise on *il Giorno de’ Morti*. The Honourable Seymour Finch lost no time in calling upon the British Minister, and brought with him three fancy bandboxes for Mrs. Hart containing five hats in elegant taste and a letter from Greville hoping that she was well and enjoying the varied diversions of Naples:

“Remember me sometimes when a rainy day keeps you at home. It will afford me pleasure to hear from you as your concerns must always be of interest to me.”

Emma was overcome by the sight of Greville’s neat writing and the evidence of his continued regard. She wept so grievously that she had to excuse herself from appearing at breakfast, and when Sir William sent word that the carriage waited, felt thankful for a convention that prescribed mourning veils on All Souls’ Day.

If foreign visitors arrived during a notable *festa* in the Neapolitan calendar it was Sir William’s practice to show the spectacle to his friends. With Captain Finch, Emma, and two lieutenants from the *Pearl*, he set out on a tour of the churches, starting at Santa Maria della Catena in Santa Lucia.

At sunrise, to the solemn clang of tolling bells, all those preserved

within the churches during the year were taken from their resting-places to be dressed once more in rich and gay interment apparel. Clothed from head to foot, wearing shoes and gloves and labels that recorded names and dates of death, the grisly company stood propped against black-draped walls. From early morning until dusk crowds processed from church to church, making the round of *i Morti*; gazing, laughing, gesticulating, and poking with inquisitive fingers at dead friends and relations.

Having seen the spectacle in the previous year, Emma firmly declined to accompany Sir William and the sea officers; instead she sat in the carriage enjoying the lovely view. Vesuvius slumbered after the recent eruption, only a thin column of smoke and an occasional hollow sigh betrayed that the volcano differed from a peaceful mountain. Glittering screes and precipitous escarpments merged into green vineyards sloping gently to the white villages gleaming along the shore. In the brilliant sunlight Emma could see a procession of brightly clothed peasants walking upon the *molo* at Portici and Ferdinando's standard floating above the palace—the King was in residence for the lark-shooting.

Having feasted her eyes on distant prospects, Emma took stock of her immediate surroundings. Market-people and fisher-folk had deserted the quay, stalls were empty, the lava pavement under a delicate tracery of silvery fish-scales and entrails looked wide as the Toledo. Halfway along, old Caterina, the *mummerara*, and her two little grandsons splashed in and out of the sulphur spring, filling earthenware jars and carrying them to a brightly painted handcart.

Cries and jostling round the church caused Emma to look back just as Captain Finch struggled through the crowd and lurched across the quay. Pea-green and swallowing distressfully, he subsided on a bollard. Having experienced similar qualms, Emma waited until his colour returned before descending from the carriage to offer friendly sympathy. During the short drive from the Palazzo they had not conversed, a circumstance she attributed to the interest of Sir William's discourse, and not as a rebuff.

Emma accosted the sea officer with her customary cordiality. "My God," she said, "could you believe there was people to enjoy a sight so disgusting?"

"No, Madam."

"I don't wonder you feel queasy; but sure you haven't seen anything so nasty as a fisherman on show last year who'd been drowned.

buried and resurrected; yet there was a free fight to see him, and the King's guards had to come down and settle it."

Emma realized she had made a bad start; supposing it was the subject that displeased, she changed it obligingly. "You must not imagine our festivals are all so disagreeable; there's the *Festa di Monte Vergine*, where people crowned with fruit and flowers come dancing with garlands, just like the Bacchanalian processions on Sir Will'um's vases."

Captain Finch stood stiffly watching a boat with scarlet, goose-winged sails running before the wind. Accustomed to adulation, Emma was greatly provoked by his behaviour. Though he was the Earl of Aylesford's brother, he was naught to look at, being short and squab, with a slab-sided face heavy as an Alderman's. . . . But *pazienza!* whether he liked her or no, she'd find out what she wanted.

"Did Greville give you my boxes with his own hands?"

"Yes, he did so."

"At Paddington Green?"

"Certainly."

"And was he well? Sometimes, when debates were long in Parliament, he looked pale and his eyes grew shadowed—'twas then he liked cosseting. Do you think Greville has maids who are thoughtful?"

"I did not inquire."

"Haven't you anything to tell me about him?"

"Nothing, Madam!"

"Then I wish to God I'd not asked you! I've known many sea officers, but never one so churlish!"

Having had little experience of masculine disapproval, Emma felt his disparagement. But what would Sir Will'um say if he discovered she had lost her temper with a guest? . . . 'Twas a thing he never did himself. . . . No matter how provokingly the English behaved, he remained courteous and bland. . . .

Feigning nonchalance, Emma strolled back to the carriage and negligently opened her parasol; through its fringe she watched Captain Finch meet and converse with his brother officers and Sir William. Making no doubt that her lapse was revealed, she waited on the defensive until he bowed and took his leave.

Sir William gracefully threaded his way between family parties picnicking outside the church. He wore a suit of blue Geneva cloth and a wide-brimmed hat which cast a shadow halfway down his face;

the sun slanting on his lean brown jaw caused his teeth to glitter dazzlingly as he smilingly accosted Emma:

"Well, here we are, having seen twenty defunct tenants of the *fondachi*, a fisherman or two, looking very corrupt, the old *padrone* of the *Crocelle*, and Ignazio, who sold cheese on the *Chiatamone*, all in their best, my dear, and making a grim show. But our sea friends declare they have seen enough *carne morta*, and ye will observe Captain Finch posting to the *molo*, intent on getting back to his frigate."

"Isn't he coming home to dine?" Emma inquired.

"The Neapolitan idea of a Holy Day has proved too much for him. I confess my susceptibilities were often shocked when first I took up my appointment here, but twenty-three years have accustomed me to the mixture of barbarism, childishness and superstition prevalent in the southern Italian." Sir William addressed his remarks to the sea officers, who still looked shaken. "Now, my dear Sirs, we'll return to my *palazzo* and forget mortality in the pleasures of wine and music, for I'll wager Mrs. Hart's singing will make you believe yourselves in heaven listening to an angel."

Not even Sir William's champagne and *Vino Greco* could transform the two lieutenants into lively young men; but both were enraptured with Emma's rendering of *Luci Belle sio vadoro*, and her dramatic impersonation of a young girl singing and dancing in a raree-show caused them to compare her performance with Elizabeth Hamilton's, whose rôle it was.

"By God, Sir, we thought Miss Hamilton incomparable till now; but she is beat, Sir, a fool in singing compared with Mrs. Hart."

"I say the same, though Elizabeth is my niece," chuckled Sir William.

The speaker became flustered. "No notion she was a relative of yours, Sir; no offence meant."

"*Non importa!* Indeed you are quite right: in a drawing-room Miss Hamilton is a charming performer, but Mrs. Hart's voice is remarkably fine. I believe myself of the first rate, and so do the best judges here. There is no saying where she may be in a year or two."

Emma was much elated. From early days in Edgware Row she had been tormented by Greville's high opinion of his cousin's voice. The Vicar of Wellingborough's daughter had been held up as incomparably superior, a composite being who amalgamated the vocal genius of Agujari with the good breeding of Louisa Stormont.

Alone with Sir William, Emma reverted to the subject: "Was it

really true when those sea officers said Miss Hamilton is a fool in singing compared with me? ”

“Quite true; yours is the finest soprano I’ve ever heard, so pure that if my eyes are shut I can believe I am listening to a *castrato*.”

Comforted, she sought reassurance on another point: “’Twas not the nasty sights in the Fishermen’s Church that drove Captain Finch back to his ship, but his dislike of me. There’s English women in plenty who’ve looked at me scornful, but never a man that I remember, and certainly not a sea officer. What do you suppose he meant by it, Sir Will’um? It put me out, I can tell you, and I’ve never felt right since. Sure, my rage will bust my girdle.”

“Pay no heed, sweet Em; there are men as devotedly wedded to chastity as monks are supposed to be. I own ’tis unusual in a sea officer, and I know naught of Captain Finch, but his father I knew well. He married late, and was faithful to his wife, avoiding temptation by frowning on every pretty face. Very likely our friend inherits a fear of venery.”

“Then you don’t think he disliked me? ”

“More probably ’twas the other way,” Sir William answered, kissing Emma’s warm red lips.

“Then I don’t mind. When you was married, was you faithful, Sir Will’um? ”

“My conscience sometimes troubles me on that score, though the devil knows that if he gave me my life over again I should succumb to the same temptations.”

“But everyone says Lady Hamilton was true and noble-minded.”

“My dear Em, if a man is loyal to a woman ’tis not because she be virtuous.”

Emma made remarkable progress under her new master. Giuseppe Aprile’s career as an opera singer was nearly at an end, but as a teacher his reputation was unchallenged. Sir William paid a heavy retaining fee in order that Emma might benefit from exclusive attention; she had three lessons a day, and by the end of the year was so fine a performer that a concert was planned to follow a diplomatic dinner given to the Commodore and officers of two Dutch warships anchored in the bay. Sixty guests, comprising all foreign representatives and the principal Neapolitan Ministers, sat down to a sumptuous repast. No women were present, but the robes and glittering ornaments of the King’s Ministers and the foreign Envoys were as fine as any dresses and jewels worn by a feminine assembly. From the

far end of the empty concert-room Emma watched the guests leave the *Sala da mangiare* and advance in pairs and in groups between marble statues lining the wide corridor. General Acton, tightly screwed into a court dress a-glitter with the Orders of Leopold, San Gennaro and the Cross of Malta, walked beside the Marchese Caracciolo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was yellow, wizened and petulant with his gout-stick. Joseph Acton, the General's brother, listened deferentially to Prince Castelvicala and the Bishop of Avellino; Count Skavronsky, enveloped in a Russian sable pelisse, gesticulated with a dirty hand at the oily and swarthy Maltese Minister. Thereafter the guests crowded so fast upon each other's heels that Emma only noted a smile here and there, a pock-marked face, or a new wig. Sir William, wearing a white satin suit beneath the scarlet Robe of the Bath, came last with the officers of the Dutch warships and Francesco Caracciolo. The Cavaliere wore the uniform Queen Carolina and General Acton had created for the Neapolitan navy, which sufficiently resembled the British model to satisfy the designer's Anglomania. Francesco Caracciolo had neither the height nor rugged appearance to show it off, and looked like the first man at San Carlo dressed for the part of an English flag officer. For an Italian he was unusually swarthy, his sleepy eyes were almost almond-shaped and half veiled by heavy, drooping lids; he had good brows, a long nose, an exceptionally small, thin-lipped mouth and an oval chin almost feminine in contour. Short and stocky, he had to look up at Commandeur Pieter Melvill, the burly, red-faced Commodore of the *Wassenaar*.

The Dutch officers laboured politely in English until they caught sight of Emma and were struck dumb. No speech was needed to express enchantment, only the Commodore attempted a compliment. He spoke fluently, with a strong Scottish accent acquired from his grandfather, who had migrated from Fife to Zeeland.

Warmed by wine and sentiment, Sir William genially clapped the back of the pseudo-Dutchman.

"Whist mon, bide till ye've heard her sing!"

Emma was on tenterhooks, listening for the sound of coach-wheels bringing the *prima donna* from the Opera House to take part in the concert. When the bold idea of singing with Brigitta Banti first entered her mind, Sir William had discouraged it in fear that Emma's nerve might fail. "Fie! Sir Will'um!" she answered, "do you take me for a coward that daren't stand up to a competition? If the Banti sings better than me, I'll own it, but sure, I think 'twill be t'other

way, for my top notes are better than hers, as you said yourself only last week."

The project that appeared an inevitable triumph when driving in the early morning through the ilex groves of Poggio Reale was transformed by candle-light into a reckless gamble. Not all the Minister's guests were friendly to his *innamorata*, and many hoped to see Emma humbled. She could not afford to fail and mortify Sir Will'um. . . .

The Banti came, supported by the tenor, Cosacelli, and wore a wonderful scarlet silk gown spangled with artificial emeralds. Originally a street singer in Milano, Brigitta retained the saucy manners of a guttersnipe veneered by the assurance of a *prima donna*. She had a wide mouth and high cheek-bones, bold, beady, black eyes and a quantity of coarse hair, oiled, befeathered and upheld by massive ornamental pins. Deferential to Sir William, she was casually patronizing to Emma; such treatment acted as an astringent. Holding her lovely head high, Emma walked proudly to the dais and with confidence she did not feel commenced an aria from Cimarosa's *Artaserse*. After the first few bars she felt no fear, although the *prima donna* stood close and listened critically. Emma sang superbly; at the end there was a hush, broken by the Banti crying: "Just God, what a voice! I would give a great deal for your voice!" As she warmly embraced her lovely rival, applause shattered the silence. Sir William, enraptured by Emma's performance, hastened to clasp her hands; in a moment she was surrounded by Count Skavronsky, Paisiello, Aprile, Fra Giordano and other musical people.

Presently it was the Banti's turn, and Emma found a seat between the Commodore and the Captain of the Dutch ships. "You must shout '*Bravo*,'" said she, "for nothing more generous could be than the way she encouraged me."

"I'll make noise enough, though you sing in a far finer style," rejoined Commandeur Melvill.

The warships were to leave Naples on the following day, but the Commodore postponed sailing to give a dinner in Emma's honour on board the *Wassenaar*. Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan were invited, several foreign envoys and Neapolitan Ministers, but only Emma and her party were to be escorted. In her excitement she was ready far too soon, and spent the interval admiring a magnificent purple satin gown over a spangled white crêpe petticoat to be worn that night at a gala performance at San Carlo; with it went a cap made in Paris of white ostrich feathers, a gift from Sir William. The

dress cost twenty-three Spanish *pistoles* and represented two months' allowance; Emma received two hundred a year, with the proviso that fifty pounds went to Mrs. Cadogan. On becoming wealthy women, mother and daughter made themselves liable for the support of Dame Kidd and the Connor family; Sarah had now five children living, and expected a sixth. Looking at the costly gown, Emma felt guilty of withholding food from hungry mouths, but Sir Will'um had told her to dress in *fiocchi* because their box at the opera was near the King and Queen's. . . .

It was the 4th of November, the name-day of Carlos III of Spain. Streets and houses were decorated, gaily dressed crowds drifted aimlessly in search of amusement, impish little boys threw crackers under the horses drawing Sir William's coach to the *molo*, while others, shouting "*Eccellenza! Eccellenza!* No fader, no mudder, *carlino* pleeze!" kept pace by turning rapid Catherine wheels.

Sir William, Emma and Mrs. Cadogan had to leave the coach below the east tower of Castel Nuovo and battle as best they might towards the Molo Grande where the long-boat waited. Near the lighthouse they found Commandeur Melvill and the Captain of the *Pallas* frigate with four senior officers listening to a *Rinaldo* in a dirty toga dramatically reciting to a motley audience sprawling at his feet. The old elocutionist was harassed by a more vigorous rival declaiming *Guerrin Meschino* and Fra Rocco, the Dominican, stertorously threatening hell fire from an adjacent bollard.

Emma was in white save for her tawny hair, which hung in ringlets nearly to her heels. "An admirable insurance," Sir William said, "against a change of weather."

Her eager expression, lovely colouring and perfect figure showed to greater advantage than in the artificial light of assembly rooms. The Dutch officers thought so, and conveyed as much, though the power to pay compliments was confined to the Commodore. Broad-faced seamen wearing rough jackets and voluminous breeches strove for the privilege of lifting Emma into the boat and enthroning her like a queen in the stern. As they rowed they smiled at her and she smiled back. It was a day of enchantment and as gay as the bells ringing from the turrets of Naples for *Re Cattolico*. Skimming across the sparkling bay, Emma gazed with delightful anticipation at the warships, "dressed in colours".

Under the lee of Punta di Posilipo the water was glassy and reflected in parti-coloured splashes flags of all nations hanging like

harlequin's washing day from stem to stern of the *Wassenaar*. The frigate's only decoration was the Netherlands flag at the staff, but as the long-boat passed she fired all her guns, starting a cannonade that rolled back and forth across the bay to die in hollow echoes among the mountains behind Sorrento.

The barge drew alongside the 64, a band on the quarter-deck struck up "God Save the King", the red ensign broke at the masthead, and as the British Minister stepped on deck, he was saluted with twenty guns. Emma, mistress of the feast, was solemnly conducted to the captain's quarters, where a long table was laid for thirty covers. *Frutti di mare*, game, sucking pig, steaming bowls of macaroni, cakes, sweets, jellies and sillabubs were set out in great profusion; each guest had his own supply of wine, cooling beside him in a snow-filled wash-deck bucket. Commandeur Melvill sat on Emma's right hand and Sir William on her left, Mrs. Cadogan was established at the foot of the table between the Captain and one of the lieutenants, and sustained a diligent conversation with the aid of a large dictionary propped against a tankard.

"Your mother is a clever woman," remarked Commandeur Melvill—"a thoroughgaun mither, as my grand-feather would have said."

"Indeed there's no words to fit her," Emma eagerly rejoined, "for there's nothing she can't do if she has the mind to try. And good she is beyond belief: there's not a thief nor beggar round Santa Lucia that hasn't a smile for *Signora Madre*."

Sir William laughed. "Ye might add, Em, that the fishwives call her in when the professional *mammama* has nearly killed them."

The wine was excellent and flowed freely; the Neapolitans, who had weak heads for strong liquors, were the first to show symptoms of distress. As they languished, so the Dutch stewards removed them. After the fourth disappearance Emma inquired as to their fate.

"They are put to bed; it is better: one does not want to see the action of good wine on the unmanly."

Thanks to Scottish ancestry, the Dutch Commodore and the British Minister caroused with impunity; the only effect upon Sir William was a slight imprudence in his choice of anecdotes. "Talking of King Ferdinand, did I tell ye of the extraordinary scene I witnessed when the death was made known of the Archduchess Josepha of Austria?" Upon the Commodore shaking his head, Sir William continued with gusto: "Carolina was not the first Princess selected by the King of Spain to be his son's consort; an elder sister was

chosen, the Archduchess Josepha. Having been told of her beauty, Ferdinando expected her arrival with pleasure, and was much disappointed when intelligence from Vienna announced her death from the smallpox. On hearing the news, I immediately hastened to the palace at Portici to condole with his youthful Majesty, and thus became an eye-witness of a scene which in any other country of Europe would be considered incredible, to wit: the spectacle of the King officiating as chief mourner at a mock funeral of the Archduchess. The Princess was represented by a young chamberlain of feminine appearance, who, dressed suitably for the mournful occasion, was laid out on an open bier according to Neapolitan custom at interments. In order that the ceremony might be correct, his face and hands were marked with chocolate drops to imitate the pustules of the smallpox, and very horrible they looked. When I encountered the procession it was proceeding with doleful chanting through the principal apartments of the palace."

"You surprise me! And then the King took the other sister?"

"Yes, the Archduchess Carolina was substituted. She was not quite sixteen at the date of the marriage. She had the charm of youth, but, as ye saw last night, could never be considered handsome. Time has proved her to be able and ambitious, she assumes the major share of the administration, and strives to improve the lot of the people, with the result that she is less esteemed than her husband, whose theory of the state is '*Festa, forza e farina*'."

"Which means?" queried the Commodore as he refilled Sir William's glass.

"Feasts, gallows and flour," replied the diplomat.

Emma was fearful lest they would reach home too late to get ready for the opera. She had made arrangements for her hair to be dressed and powdered, an operation that could not be accomplished in less than an hour, and it was now quarter past five, English 'time, or twenty-three o'clock by the Italian dial. The feast that seemed delightful three hours before was now wearisome; the long table was littered with broken victuals and overturned bottles; topsy revellers lolled amid vacant seats. At the far end Mrs. Cadogan and the Captain had cleared a place for two-handed cribbage.

Emma looked reproachfully at Sir William. "'Tis a quarter past five, only two hours before the opera starts, and you know I have to get dressed."

"My dearest girl, what better can you want than you have on?"

Take my word, for some years to come, the *môre* simply you dress the more conspicuous will be your beauty, which, according to my idea, is the most perfect I have yet met with, take it all in all."

"And in mine," cried the Commodore. "Come, Sir! We'll have another bottle to drink to the loveliest woman in the world!"

Rising with solemnity, they drank the toast and flung the glasses into the middle of the table. Mrs. Cadogan looked up and glanced admonishingly at her daughter.

"Sir Will'um! Sir Will'um," whispered Emma, "I'll be angry if you don't get up to go, for you know as well as me 'tis the rule to be at the theatre before the royal party."

"You are right, sweet Emma, as usual, though I confess that were the choice left to me I'd remain here."

It seemed an age until the boat was manned and ready, and an eternity before the four principal officers assembled who had invitations from Sir William to seats in his box. The quartette were unsteady on their feet and inclined to truculence with the seaman who helped them into the boat. In the stern-sheets Sir William and the Commodore became as brothers, and convivially crossed their arms round Emma's waist; Mrs. Cadogan sat farther forward with the Captain, who was completely sober.

The bay was flooded with soft mother-o'-pearl light, sea and sky blended in fluid translucence; Vesuvius, surmounted by a shaft of motionless vapour, looked flat and unreal as a blue mountain painted on a scene at San Carlo; Nature was in a mood of effacement, unlike the works of man, which assertively stood forth. Every village round the bay, every isolated church and villa had advanced from its background. Buildings in Naples were sharp-edged; flat-roofed houses mounted in uneven steps from Castel dell' Uovo to Castel Sant' Elmo; turrets, campanili and maroon-coloured domes uprose above livid façades. As the last blush of sunset faded behind Ischia, the aspect changed: air, sky and sea were suffused with blue that deepened from second to second; the column of smoke from Vesuvius showed luridly, little tongues of flame leapt up. Blanched to the colour of old bones, the closely packed terraces of Naples looked impregnable and eerie as a ghostly fortress. Here and there a red light gleamed before a shrine to the Virgin—Fra Rocco's method of inducing the devout to light the darkest and most dangerous corners of the city. High against the sky a fiery plume fluttered from a cresset on the ramparts of Sant' Elmo; down on the King's causeway torches

revealed Sir William's coach, a group of footmen with feathers in their conical hats, and the high walls and flanking towers of Castel dell' Uovo.

"Oh, Sir Will'um, we'll never reach the opera in time," Emma cried in the utmost apprehension.

"My dear, I answer as always, *pazienza per forza*."

The Dutch seamen had to row the length of Molo Grande before the boat could turn into harbour. In its wake extended a marbled, phosphorescent track; every dip of the oars threw up showers of diamonds. A clamour of church bells, the strum of guitars and the monotonous *cantilena* of street-singers floated from the shore; on the quay a man and girl were working up to the final frenzy of the *tarantella* to a tune hummed by spectators. Through this crowd Sir William's footmen could be seen beating a passage with their long staves.

Emma's impatience made her run the whole length of the *molo*, an action that brought no benefit. The Minister's party were in no state to bestir themselves, and a full ten minutes elapsed before the coach moved off. Emma was now indifferent about her dress, her only concern was to reach the theatre before the royal party entered through their private corridor from the palace.

"*Pazienza, Emma, pazienza!*" Sir William murmured.

"I vow I can't understand why you are all willing to risk being shut out until the second act rather than exert yourselves!"

Leaping from the coach, she reached the foyer as a royal fanfare rang through the auditorium; casting dignity to the winds, she posted upstairs, past mirrored walls that reflected her flying figure and tawny, flowing hair, to gain Sir William's box just as the King and Queen entered the *palco reale*. While the national anthem was played, Emma stood well in the foreground, and when the audience sang the second verse her gorgeous voice rang out, filling the vast theatre. Everyone fell silent, leaving her to finish alone; a tumult of *bravi* and clapping drowned the furtive entry into his box of Sir William and his party. Their Majesties bowed to His Excellency, the Queen turned to take her seat, and, while her face was averted from the audience, she smiled at Emma.

"Did you notice? She smiled at me, and I was afraid I'd done for myself by singing so bold," whispered Emma, as her hand crept into Sir William's.

"Had your performance been bad the act must have proved fatal;

as 'tis, the experiment must not be repeated." To soften the rebuke, he tweaked a long curl that strayed across his sleeve.

Emma's spirits were too high to be dashed. The proud Princess of Austria had smiled on her, the people had applauded, and six sea officers of a foreign Power were treating Emma Hart as though she was a Queen. . . . What more could be asked of heaven? . . .



CHAPTER FIVE

FOR over three years Emma pursued a policy of self-discipline and industry without achieving any more substantial reward than compliments and applause. Her beauty had come to maturity; her voice, as Sir William wrote to Greville, "Surprises all who hear her . . . she will be one of the best singers in Europe." The Minister was more deeply in love than at the beginning of their connexion, and more dependent upon her for comfort. Thanks to Emma and Mrs. Cadogan, his large establishment was homely as a small one, a dinner to a hundred unexpected guests was produced with as little fuss as the Lancashire hot-pots made by Emma in Signora Madre's private kitchen. He was so contented that he cheerfully postponed visiting England in favour of a month's tour in Puglia, travelling slowly over almost impassable roads through gorgeous scenery.

"Without any other accommodation but what we carried with us," he informed his nephew, "for a single man who might sleep every night in a convent the journey would not be so inconvenient, but Emma would be of the party, and she is so good there is no refusing her."

On the journey Sir William added a few items to his collection of *virtù*, among them a Greek sculptured intaglio of the head of Hercules and a little one, "just like Emma." Free from diplomatic business, the British Minister had time to consider the possible outcome of illicit association between cautious age and impetuous youth, reflections which he duly confided to his dearest Charles:

"Emma often asks me, do you love me? ay, but as well as your new apartment? Her conduct is such as to gain universal esteem, and she profits daily in musick and language. I endeavour to lose no time in forming her, and certainly she would be welcome to share

with me, *on our present footing*, all I have during my life, but I fear her views are beyond what I can bring myself to execute; and that when her hopes on that point are over, that she will make herself and me unhappy; but all this *entre nous*; if ever a separation should be necessary for our mutual happiness, I should settle £150 a year on her, and £50 on her mother, who is a very worthy woman; but all this is only thinking aloud to you, and foreseeing that the difference of 57 and 22 may produce events; but, indeed, hitherto her behaviour is irreproachable, but her temper, as you must know, unequal."

Sir William under-estimated by two years Emma's age in 1789, and by a similar miscalculation reduced his own, a mental lapse that did not impinge on his social accuracy. For a man in his position the idea of such a marriage was impossible, as he told Emma with some peevishness.

"Don't pester His Excellency, gal," advised Mrs. Cadogan. "Time is on your side. Go on improving yourself and making him comfortable, and gradually he'll take kindly to the notion of making you My Lady."

"I don't believe it," Emma answered despondently. "Why should he make me respectable after so long? I own I've worked for it, but I was a fool."

"You get cast down too easily; if you ask me, Emma, your battle is half won. Trust more in Providence, gal, and keep your temper."

The winter of 1789-1790 brought a large flock of English visitors, the most distinguished being the Duchess of Hamilton and Argyll, the Duke of Argyll, and several members of their family, without whom the Duchess refused to quit Britain. Lovely Elizabeth Gunning's first marriage with James, sixth Duke of Hamilton, made her a courtesy second cousin to Sir William, a relationship that she maintained still existed although the Duke had been dead for over thirty years.

Entrusted with the task of finding accommodation, Sir William foresaw difficulties. "Although the medical faculty ridicule the idea, there exists throughout Italy an ignorant belief that hectic fevers are infectious. After the death of a patient in an hotel I've even known the *padrone* to charge the relatives for scraping the walls and fumi-gating. When such nonsense prevails, 'twill not be easy to find the owner of a good residence willing to accept as a tenant the Duchess, who I fear is far advanced in the disease."

"Then invite her here, Sir Will'um," cried Emma. "Indeed there's enough room for a large family if we contrive things a little."

The Minister looked uncomfortable. "Nothing would afford me greater pleasure, were we situated differently, but you've had sufficient proof what sticklers the British are for the proprieties, and I doubt if Her Grace differs from others."

"You mean she wouldn't rest under the same roof as me?"

Laughing awkwardly, Sir William answered: "Well, putting it bluntly, that's what it amounts to."

For once his worldly knowledge was at fault. Shortly after her arrival the Duchess of Argyll insisted on meeting Mrs. Hart; thenceforth Emma was a welcome visitor. Soon she was on affectionate terms with all the family; Lady Augusta Clavering confided to her sympathetic ears the disillusionments that had followed quickly on her hasty marriage. Early in the previous year she had made a runaway match with Henry Clavering, son of Sir John Clavering, Warren Hastings's stout opponent. Her baby girl was six months old and she was again pregnant. "Oh, Emma," Lady Augusta moaned, between paroxysms of nausea, "how wise you are not to wed and tie yourself up as I have done. It is preposterous for a pair as ill mated as Henry and me to breed as we are doing. Nasty little wretches they'll be, with parents always squabbling; nobody'll want them—I declare I don't!"

Emma took it upon herself to remonstrate with the weak and amiable Marquis of Lorne over his predilections for faro and Celeste Coltellini, "the pearl of Naples," a lively *prima donna* of *Opéra Bouffe* at the Teatro de' Fiorentini. Emma accompanied the two younger children on expeditions to Posilipo in search of sea urchins, and was always ready to share with the unfortunate Duchess exercises prescribed by the faculty for her malady. On the advice of Dr. James Carmichael Smyth, advocate of swinging as a remedy for pulmonary consumption, the courageous invalid submitted her frail, pain-racked body to the discomfort of a narrow, backless seat attached by ropes to the lintel of a stone porch. With Emma standing behind to supply motive power, they attained dizzy altitudes, which should, but did not, confer the benefits so confidently predicted in Dr. Smyth's lately published treatise. When weakness put an end to the experiment, Emma was the Duchess of Argyll's companion in a carriage slowly driven up and down the Chiaia. The vivid beauty of the young woman and the ravaged loveliness of the old attracted

every eye; Emma was accorded a new kind of attention; envy and deference accompanied admiration.

One stormy day as they drove through flying spray rising over the sea-wall, the Duchess broke a long silence. "Sir William should marry you; I shall tell him so. As I halt on the brink of the grave I can judge which things are of consequence in the life I leave and in the sphere to which I go. Kindness, honesty and courage extend beyond death, riches and pride are left behind. In the world of fashion worth is sacrificed to expediency; I have counselled it often, God help me! Before it is too late, I'll make what atonement I can, my dear."

In the New Year English society in Naples was augmented by the arrival of Lord and Lady Elcho from Rome, a cheerful, well-matched pair who gave their best endeavours to enlivening the invalid. Lady Elcho soon conceived the romantic notion that Emma and the British Minister were secretly married, a conjecture encouraged by the Duchess.

"The farther Susan spreads the rumour, the better for you; as soon as my cousin William realizes that such a marriage would be accepted, he'll find courage to take the plunge."

Reports of the British Minister's marriage with his lovely mistress spread like wild fire and were generally credited; it was understood that Sir William's official situation prevented a declaration. Ladies who professed to be in the secret whispered that the rite had been performed in Rome by Sir William's old school-fellow, the Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry. Sir William, aware of the gossip, prudently feigned ignorance while closely observing its effect.

The early spring was inclement, north winds driving over the white peaks of the Apennines carried snow and hail to Naples. Semi-tropical plants shrivelled in the frost, icicles hung from the fountains, Vesuvius and Somma were transformed by white crowns. Coughing and wretched in the Villa Imperiale, the Duchess of Argyll kept her bed, while her family, cowering over braziers, recklessly stirred the charcoal, determined to enjoy a few moments' warmth. When discomfort became unendurable, the Duke established himself by the fire in Sir William's cabinet to plot with maps and Thomas Nugent's guide the most expeditious route to Calais. Disquieting accounts from travellers who had recently come through France made him anxious to get the perilous journey over as soon as possible.

The insurrection that began in Paris with the meeting of the States General on the 5th of May, 1789, had spread to the provinces. In July,

victorious attacks by the mob upon the Hôtel des Invalides and the Bastille encouraged malcontents up and down the country. Food was scarce and distress widespread, the old judicial courts had ceased to exist, law and order were only a memory. Deserters from the army, drifting back to their native villages with stories of booty to be had for the taking, incited the peasants to storm and set fire to the great houses. Noblemen and their families were murdered or driven into the towns; every kind of licence prevailed. The populace showed no discrimination and attacked coaches of foreign or French travellers with equal zest.

At first the revolution excited considerable sympathy in England, especially as it was taken for granted that the revolutionists intended to form a government in imitation of the British constitution. But as the ruthless character of the French revolt became manifest, approval turned into disgust. Newspapers received by the Duke of Argyll and Sir William Hamilton reported a clash between Fox, Burke and Sheridan during a debate on the Army Estimates which reflected the division of opinion throughout the country. Despite its sinister accompaniment, Fox regarded the revolution as the dawn of European regeneration and praised the French soldiers for refusing to act against the people, which, he said, "took away many of his objections to a standing army". Edmund Burke, rising in great agitation, deprecated the countenance given to the French revolution by his old political friend and leader. Enlarging on the dangers of the extraordinary catastrophe, he expressed fears that the movement might reach England, where there were people watching only for the opportunity to imitate the French. In order to defend the British constitution against the baneful democratic spirit which was producing so much havoc in France, he was prepared to separate himself from his oldest friends. Fox replied with moderation, but Sheridan burst into invective against Burke and described his speech as one disgraceful to an Englishman, a direct encomium of despotism, and "a libel on men who were virtuously engaged in labouring to obtain the rights of men."

The Duke of Argyll, after reading the account aloud, dropped the paper on the floor. "What do ye think of that?" he demanded with intensified gloom.

"Pooh!" responded Sir William. "Two Irishmen will always fight if one waits long enough! As to Fox and Burke, though acting together through succeeding Parliaments, their intimacy seemed always

to commence and to cease at the entrance to the lobby. The surprise is that two individuals so discordant in their modes of life have kept in step so long."

"But Fox's views on this outrage in France, Sir! They're preposterous! The man's a renegade! I can't think how Harry Holland and Carrie Lennox begot him."

"Fox is a born rebel, though he would describe himself by the Holland family motto: '*Vitam impendere vero.*'"

If the French Revolution was causing discord in the English Parliament, it created consternation among the monarchs of Europe. Since the 5th of October Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were virtually prisoners in the Tuileries; foreign kings observed with alarm the effects of the revolution in their own domains and trembled for their crowns. In no country was danger more to be apprehended than in Austria, ruled by Emperor Joseph II, Maria Theresa's eldest son, who, sharing the Hapsburg love of reform, had, during his seven years' reign, forced his philosophy of reason upon nobles and people to the detriment of his popularity with both. Fortunately for Europe, a disease from which he suffered was so greatly accelerated by anxiety for his favourite sister that he died on the 20th of February, 1790. His successor was his brother Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Unlike Joseph, Leopold administered reforms in small doses, which had gradually advanced his grand duchy to a high level of material prosperity. His intelligence and cool judgment might be relied upon to pacify the nobles and people of the Austrian Empire, driven almost to open rebellion by Joseph's well-intentioned but too-hasty improvements.

On ascending the Imperial throne, Leopold's first care was to secure the succession and the happiness of his family. His eldest son, Francis, just widowed by the death in childhood of Elizabeth, Princess of Württemberg, was to marry as speedily as decency permitted his first cousin, Maria Theresa of Naples. The Emperor arranged a similar alliance for his second son Ferdinand with Princess Luigia Amalia; looking into the future, the beneficent despot envisaged the betrothal of his daughter Clementina, aged nine, to the Hereditary Prince of Naples, who was four years older.

Queen Carolina was well satisfied with plans so advantageous to her children. Princess Maria Theresa could now look forward to becoming at a distant date the Empress of Austria, while Luigia Amalia had the immediate prospect of being Grand Duchess of

Tuscany, if the dangerous conflagration in France did not spread and destroy every crowned head in Europe.

Looking feverishly for means to secure the royal defences, the Queen's thoughts turned naturally to Britain, with her fine fleet and a reputation for liberty that might be calculated to withstand infection from competitive doctrines endemic on the other side of the Channel. Her view was shared by General Acton, who pointed out that Britain was already a Mediterranean Power and the inveterate enemy of Spain.

"That is the difficulty: my hatred of the Spanish Bourbons is not shared in this country, as you know."

"Some means can be found of directing opinion into right paths, and, once established, proper methods will avoid further strayings. The influence of Spain on his Majesty is much diminished in two years since the death of Don Carlos. By good management King Ferdinand can be led to see that his interest lies with England; this will be rendered more easy by his regard for the good Chevalier Hamilton. His Excellency goes to London next year to put his affairs in order."

"Does the Signora Hart accompany him?"

Shrugging his shoulders, General Acton threw out his hands in a Gallic gesture. "He did not say, but I think so. Everywhere she is seen with the Duchess of Argyll and other noble British ladies. Many believe that the Chevalier and Mrs. Hart are secretly married."

"That I don't credit."

"Neither do I, but it will happen; therefore it would be wisdom to show some small acknowledgment of the lady while it is a gracious act. This will please the Chevalier and make him happy to use his influence with the King of England on our account."

"I can hardly receive her," demurred the Queen.

"No, no, you cannot do that; but you can order those ladies who have their doors kept closed to open them."

Born in France, Italian through circumstance, and English by sympathy, General Acton spoke the three languages as a foreigner. The son of an English physician settled at Besançon, John Acton at an early age entered the French navy, only to find his career abruptly cut short by a quarrel developing between his father and the Government. Fortified by self-confidence and eulogies from his superior officers, he applied to Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, who made him captain of a frigate. In 1775 Acton commanded the Tuscan con-

tingent of a joint force of Spanish, Tuscan and Neapolitan warships dispatched against the Bey of Algiers, an expedition that would have ended disastrously but for the gallantry of John Acton. This exploit brought him to the notice of Prince Caramanico, favourite of Queen Carolina, who suggested him as an officer to command the navy she was about to build. The matter was quickly arranged. Leopold was delighted to forward his sister's ambitions; in 1779 John Acton, aged 43, entered the Neapolitan service as Admiral of the Fleet, later to become Minister of Marine and Captain-General of the army. His successes in building a navy and army sufficiently strong to render Naples independent of help from Madrid caused umbrage to Carlos III and exalted Acton in the esteem of Queen Carolina. Good looks had not contributed to his rapid advancement; broad-shouldered and of middle height, he carried himself stiffly, and, when sitting, had a curious habit of crossing one arm over the other to clasp opposite knees, an attitude that appeared secretive and suspicious. His face resembled a clerical figure-head, buffeted and raddled by storms and sun; his small eyes were bright and watchful; silvery hair, receding at the temples, fell in a fringe over his collar. He dressed with prim sobriety in drab or bottle green, cut so high that a limp neck-cloth peeped forth furtively as a conspirator.

"General Acton buys his white thread stockings from a stall in Largo del Mercato," Emma confided to Sir William; "do you wonder they wrinkle like calashes?"

Vigilant neutrality obtained between Signora Hart and the foremost Minister of the kingdom. He came to her concerts and applauded as loudly as the rest, he praised her attitudes and even attempted the *tarantella* as her partner without convincing Emma that his affability was other than superficial. After the public favours she received from the Argyll family, his manner changed; she detected in his wooden visage stiff respect for a doughty exponent who had battled through the same storm as himself.

During February Goethe was added to the number of Emma's sincere admirers. At a party given by Philip Hackert at Palazzo Francavilla she performed her attitudes, and of this spectacle the great man wrote:

"The Chevalier Hamilton, so long resident here as British Ambassador, so long, too, connoisseur and student of nature and art, has found their counterpart in a lovely English girl, some twenty

years of age. She is exceedingly beautiful and finely built. He arrays her in a Grecian garb that becomes her to perfection. Loosening her tresses, she takes a pair of shawls and effects changes of posture, moods, gestures, mien and appearance that makes one really feel as if one were in some dream. Here is visible complete, and bodied forth in movements of surprising variety, all that so many artists have sought in vain to fix and render. Successively standing, kneeling, seated, reclining, grave, mournful, merry, teasing, abandoned, penitent, alluring, threatening, suffering; one follows the other and grows out of it. She knows how to drape and twist a single kerchief for every expression, and to adjust it into a hundred kinds of headgear. Her elderly knight holds the torches for her performance, and is absorbed in his soul's desire. In her he finds the charm of all antiques, the fair profiles on Sicilian coins, the Apollo Belvedere himself. . . . She is a masterpiece of the Arch-Artist."

The universal approbation won by Emma was not without its effect on Sir William. A marriage which had seemed preposterous a year ago now appeared judicious as well as desirable. This comfortable conclusion was strengthened by the Queen on a sunny day in early April when she and the British Minister strolled together in the English garden at Caserta.

"Everywhere I hear praises of the Signora Hart," she gently said. "I wish the etiquette of my position did not preclude me from the enjoyment of her many gifts. Perhaps circumstances will change, my dear Chevalier?"

Sir William's lean brown face remained suavely impassive. "Possibly, but as your Majesty must know, there are difficulties. Am I to understand that, in the event of an alteration in my—er—*ménage*, I could count upon the approval of this Court?"

"My dear Chevalier, the King and myself must always rejoice in the felicity of a valued friend."

Following this pertinent conversation the Signora Hart's name appeared on many invitation cards formerly sent exclusively to His Excellency; for the first time she was received in the salons of the Marchese del Vasto and the Filangieri family. Following so many hints of royal approval, Sir William was ready to give cordial assurances of his good intentions towards Emma when the subject was broached by the Duchess of Argyll. Sunshine and warmth had recovered the

invalid sufficiently to undertake the journey home, and Sir William paid his farewell visit.

"A dying woman has privileges, William. She dares to be impertinent because the stone walls of the tomb will soon hide her from mortal eyes. Therefore I say, 'follow your heart, my dear friend, marry your lovely Emma and give her the position she deserves and will ornament'."

"You have guessed the trend of my inclination, but your familiarity with our Court at home must render you aware of the obstacles in my way."

"I think the King will consent if you reveal your feelings. I was told by your nephew Robert, who was in attendance during the greater part of the King's illness, that His Majesty during his worst period constantly spoke of his early love of Lady Pembroke, and frequently tried to escape to her. Such secret faithfulness would render him lenient if you opened your heart."

"Ye may be right. Poor George! I well remember his unhappy passion for Eliza Churchill; and I could sympathize, for I was suffering like torments over her sister Di."

"Alas! How heavy are the fetters of worldly policy! Have ye heard these lines?"

'Oh Dear Eliza ever love thy Prince
Who had rather suffer death than leave Thee'."

Sir William looked bewildered. "They're monstrously bad!"

Wiping her eyes with the corner of her pocket handkerchief, the Duchess answered: "They were wrote by the King over and over again when he was demented. So you see he'll understand about Emma. Now you must go, for I am tired and we make an early start in the morning."

Rising, Sir William gazed sadly down into the ravaged, but still lovely face. "Do ye remember that night at my Lord Chesterfield's when Hamilton lost a thousand pounds at faro because he saw neither the bank nor the cards, but only you, sitting at t'other end of the room?"

"Surely I do, and two nights after when his impatience made him send for a parson, who declined to marry us without licence or ring. Then Jamie swore he would send for the Archbishop, and finally, at

half an hour after midnight, I was married with a ring from the bed-curtain by the light of a dip brought by the clerk who came in his nightshirt to that dreadful Mayfair Chapel."

Her eyes travelled wistfully to the sunlit bay, gaily patterned with bright sails of fishing-boats, but her thoughts remained in the past. "What strange, mad chances one takes in youth! But youth has gone for ever, and now ye may kiss me, William, for it is good-bye!"

By the end of May the English had all gone home, and in their place came *émigrés* from France, who ensconced themselves in fine apartments on the Chatamone and in villas along the Chiaia. The new flock of aristocratic visitors delighted Italian *padroni* until bills mounted and payments were erratic. One by one trinkets found their way into the goldsmiths' dark shops in the Orefici; pearls and precious stones changed ownership through the instrumentality of amateurs who bartered valuables in a gentlemanly manner. It was through the painter, Don Andrea, that Sir William heard of a bulse of diamonds going at a bargain of five hundred pounds. Torn from their settings, they represented an heirloom of the family de Louvois. The stones were of good water and tolerable size, worth, as Sir William knew, treble the sum asked. Yet he hesitated, between the wish to give them to Emma and a prudent disinclination to incur further debts. Since his last visit to England he had expended over two thousand pounds on antiquities. A new apartment lined with peach-blossomed marble from Puglia and supported by columns of yellow alabaster of Gesualdo was costing nearly that sum; the combined transactions put him considerably into debt with his bankers, Messrs. Ross and Ogilvie. Letters from England informed him of further commitments, ambitious plans for the development of his Pembrokeshire estates absorbing rents and colliery profits that he counted upon for income.

Alert to the immense possibilities of the natural harbour of Milford, Greville had effected the transfer of the custom-house from Pembroke and was successful in establishing a service of packet-boats between Waterford and Hubberstone to carry the Irish and London Mail. These achievements called for the building of a quay to accommodate the packets, and an inn for the convenience of travellers. While agreeing to erect a modest inn, Sir William jibbed at the larger expense. Negotiations for the establishment of a Quaker colony of whalers from Nova Scotia who were to carry on their industry between Hubberstone and the Falkland Islands was well in

train, and aid from the Government solicited, before Greville informed his uncle.

"You must not think me mad," he wrote, "nor mention it in your letters to others, for it is a negotiation of delicacy to move a colony from the American States to G.B., and is better not talked of till executed."

Alarmed by the enterprises undertaken on his behalf, Sir William had remonstrated early in 1790:

"I dare say all you propose, such as the Act of Parliament and buildings and exchanges would be greatly to the advantage of the Estate in process of time, but it is by no means convenient to me to run myself into debt and difficulties for a prospect of future advantages to be enjoy'd—by whom? I am not selfish, and would certainly sacrifice a little for the hope of benefiting the man I love best when I am gone, but your plan seems to be very extensive, and of course must be attended with considerable expense."

"Were Charles as venturesome in love as in business, he would have secured an heiress long ago," Sir William observed to Emma.

"Did he ever speak to you of Henrietta Willoughby?" she asked. "I thought he meant to marry her, and it nearly broke my heart."

"Poor child!" he answered, running his fingers through her curls. "Charles was no more fortunate with Henrietta than with the others. She married three years ago Richard Lumley-Saville, Lord Scarborough's brother and his heir."

"She had thirty thousand pounds. With such an independence I wonder she didn't hurry to wed Greville."

"Her portion turned out to be but twenty. As the bridegroom inherited his uncle's large fortune and estates, the bait could have formed no part of the attraction."

"Well, I owe her gratitude, for without her I'm sure I should not have been sent to you. Oh, Sir Will'um, I'm glad I came, I am indeed!"

"Do you really love me, Em?"

"Yes, truly."

Three nights later, as she was dressing for the opera, Sir William came behind her and spilled from a leather bulse a glittering shower into her lap.

Emma caught her breath and rapturously clasped her hands. "Diamonds!" she cried. "Can they be for me? Look! look! Sir Will'um! They're like the cascades at Caserta when the sun shines."

"No, my darling, they sparkle like your lovely eyes."

"Are they for me?"

"You have so often longed for diamonds that I determined to buy some when I got an opportunity, for you deserve everything, my sweet love. Would you believe it, Em? The Queen is preaching you up as a rare example of virtue, and on every hand I hear how much ye are beloved."

Dressed in her shift and petticoat, Emma made a ravishing burden in his arms. Her lips pressed ardently to his, her warm, soft bosom rose and fell beneath his searching hand. His breath was uneven, his eyes shone glassily between narrowed lids. "You are a lovely woman, by God you are!"

Time passed. At San Carlo's the mirrored walls of Sir William's box reflected the swaying lights of candles and a pair of empty chairs.

The second phase of love continued to flame into extravagant impulses that would have graced a first passion. Emma must be painted again—this time by Madame Vigée Le Brun, an *émigrée* who was combining exile with profit. Lacking a suitable studio, a large room had been placed at the artist's disposal by Count Paul Skavronsky, patron of the arts and Russian Minister, who occupied a palace on the Chiaia. Emma drove thither to be painted once more as a Bacchante. Madame Le Brun's ideas of a Bacchanalian priestess bore no resemblance to those of Romney or Sir Joshua Reynolds, and were quite contrary to Emma's notions of modesty. Quelled by the Frenchwoman's determination, Emma posed naked on the ground with an empty goblet in her hand and vine-leaves in her hair. At the end of the sitting she rebelled.

"I can't go again unless I've a shift or something to wear," she indignantly told Sir William. "I won't have those beauties that are sacred to you exposed to the common eyes of all, and so I told Vigée Le Brun."

"How did she answer?"

"She laughed, and that made me wild. The Countess Skavronsky laughed too."

"Was she there?"

"Yes, lying on a couch wrapped up in a great black fur cloak. And this will surprise you, Sir Will'um! When I said I wouldn't be

painted naked, she threw it back to show me she had nothing on either!"

"Russians are usually rather singular."

"The Countess must be, to share her uncle's attentions with her four sisters and the Empress Catherine! God knows I wouldn't be wed to Count Skavronsky if he was the last man on earth, but I'd rather him than have Prince Potemkin for my lover."

"Yet Ekaterina preferred her uncle! I have always been puzzled why she appealed to him; she is beautiful, but quite the dullest of the Engelhardt sisters."

"When I'm there she does nothing but lie admiring her long, white hands; sometimes she glances at dozens of trunks full of clothes that stand about the room. 'What is the use of all this?' she says. 'Who wants them?'"

"If she waits a little longer poor Skavronsky will be dead, then the dresses will do for Potemkin's Court at Jassy, which I understand he holds with almost Asiatic pomp between his military operations against the Turks."

Madame Le Brun's refusal to pose Emma in any other way lasted for several days, a deadlock most provoking to Sir William, who had paid a large fee in advance. Ultimately a compromise was reached: Emma consented to be painted wrapped in a tiger skin purchased by the artist from a needy compatriot.

"But your scruples have spoilt the picture, my love," Sir William ruefully observed, "and it is the most expensive skin I've ever heard of, as it has cost me a hundred pounds."

"Madame Le Brun doesn't mean to starve in exile," Emma scathingly replied.

The Court remained in Naples throughout the summer, which compelled Sir William and the other foreign Ministers to do likewise. At the palace dressmakers and embroideresses were busy on trousseaux for the royal brides and on the robe the Queen was to wear at the Hungarian coronation of Leopold II. Largo del Palazzo Reale was crowded with people hoping to see the princesses, whose approaching nuptials rendered them nearly as interesting as if they were already *incinta*. As the day approached for the cavalcade to set forth, decorative standards appeared in the Toledo and a triumphal arch in stucco with the gilt device: "*Viva Maria Theresa! Viva Luigia Amalia! Figli Maschi!*" Diplomats and their wives were to

watch the procession from a window in the palace. Sir William was given a special pass to a private gallery.

"The Queen said it would allow me to bring a friend," said the Minister, with a significant smile.

"Did you ever know anyone so kind?" Emma demanded.

Six post-coaches-and-four had been sent to Aversa some days before the royal departure in order to foster the Neapolitans' simple belief that the journey would continue in the gilded rococo carriages in which it began. Sir William's privileged position in a balcony overlooking the central court allowed Emma to watch preparations denied to foreign envoys established in windows facing the largo. Gentlemen of the escort sent by Emperor Leopold to accompany the brides to his territory could be seen in gorgeous uniforms waiting under the porticos while their horses impatiently capered in the court. Sir William drew Emma's attention to her old friend, Count Dietrichstein, dressed in a splendid white-and-blue uniform with the *Toison d'or* and the Order of St. Stephen glittering on his breast.

"Oh, how old he has grown!" she exclaimed.

"Yet he is younger than I," Sir William responded in a mortified tone.

She hastened to reassure. "That he can't be, for you are younger than anyone I know."

The Hereditary Prince and the princesses were the first to appear; Maria Theresa's eyes and nose were inflamed, and the handkerchief she applied to them seemed already saturated. Fat little Luegia Amalia solaced herself with cherries secreted in a white satin bag embroidered with the coronet of Tuscany—anticipated exaltation that did not stop her brother snatching the bag and the cherries. Efforts at recapture were frustrated by noblemen of the escort who came to click their heels and kiss her hand. In response she bobbed awkwardly, watching with anxious, beady eyes Francis ejecting cherry stones at a golden cherub on the royal carriage.

"Princess Maria Theresa has more the look of a queen," Emma observed.

"Neither compare with their mother when she first came to Naples. When only fifteen Queen Carolina had dignity and *savoir-faire* of a woman twice her age."

"Both princesses look wretched; do you suppose they dislike their bridegrooms?"

"Probably—predilection plays no part in royal alliances, which are

arranged to satisfy ambitions of dynasts, regardless of the moral, mental and physical degeneration already rife in nearly every royal family of Europe. I shall be curious to see the offspring of these unions which convert the brides' maternal uncle and paternal aunt into parents-in-law, while a corresponding relationship will be created for the grooms."

"I'd forgotten the Empress of Austria is sister to the King of Naples."

"Aye—the son and daughter of Charles III of Spain married the daughter and son of Maria Theresa of Austria. Remembering the imbecility of Ferdinand's eldest brother, I wonder Carolina dared contemplate further intermarriages."

"Did you ever see the Duke of Calabria who should have been King Carlos' heir?"

"Yes, when he visited this Court. On particular occasions he was allowed to hold a sort of levée, when the foreign Ministers repaired to his apartments to pay their compliments to him; but his greatest amusement consisted in having his hand held up by attendants, while gloves were put on, one larger than another, to the number of fifteen or sixteen."

With the departure of the royal Family, Naples shed its gaiety. Scaffolding uprose round Palazzo Reale, noble families closed town houses and followed the Court to Vienna or migrated to country estates. Welcoming a remission of social duty, Sir William employed his leisure in tabulating his collection of vases and dispatching objects of *virtù* to be sold when he reached England in the spring of the following year. He now spoke freely to Emma of marriage and discussed the chances of obtaining permission from the King. "If I don't get it we must abandon the idea. Though I dote on you, Em, I confess I would not give up my position here if that were the price of making ye an honest woman."

The absence of the King and Queen decided many English travellers to winter in Rome, thus Sir William had ample leisure to devote to the Legges when they arrived from Florence early in December. He waited upon them immediately, and later, while dressing for the opera, described the visit to Emma.

"Mrs. Legge appeared unwell, so, remembering your friendly acquaintance with Heneage in Edgware Row, I proffered your aid and companionship, only to regret my courtesy."

"Wasn't she grateful?"

"Mrs. Legge said she had no doubt of the offers being kindly intended, but, having no reason to think Mrs. Hart's present situation differed from her former line of life, she must decline all suggestions of assistance or friendship."

"The horrid wretch! I vow she can die in the *Recluserio* for all the help she'll get from me! I hope you'll not wait on her again, Sir Will'um?"

"That would not be policy. Mrs. Legge is on intimate terms with Queen Charlotte, who is, as ye know, my dearest, the one likely to oppose our marriage. We will give the Legges no occasion for offence; I shall call upon her as often as necessary and you will receive Heneage affably."

Stuffing her feelings, Emma met Greville's friend with apparent cordiality. Gleelessly malicious, she let him see the spell she had cast over Sir William. "All my ambition is to make him happy, and you can see it is so," she said complacently; "indeed, we are held up here as a model couple, and Queen Carolina tells all the brides in the Court circle to take example by me, which is only anticipating events, for 'tis no secret we are going to England in the spring for Sir Will'um to get the King's sanction to our marriage."

So well did Emma succeed in her design that Heneage Legge conceived it a duty to appraise Greville of his danger, and on the 8th of March wrote:

"Her influence over Sir W.H. exceeds all belief; his attachment exceeds admiration, it is perfect dotage. She gives everybody to understand that he is now going to England to solicit the King's consent to marry her, and that on her return she shall appear as Ly H. She says it is impossible to continue in her present dubious state, which exposes her to frequent slight and mortification; and his whole thought, happiness and comfort seems so center'd in her presence, that if she should refuse to return on other terms, I am confident she will gain her point, against which it is the duty of every friend to strengthen his mind as much as possible; and she will be satisfied with no argument but the King's absolute refusal of his approbation. Her talents and powers of amusing are very wonderful; her voice is very fine, but she does not sing with great taste, and Aprili says she has not a good ear; her attitudes are beyond description beautiful and striking, and I think you will find her figure much improved since you last saw her. . . . I have all along told her she could never

change her situation for the better, and that she is a happier woman as Mrs. H. than she would be as Ly H., when, more reserved behaviour being necessary, she would be deprived of half her amusements, and must no longer sing those comic parts which tend so much to the entertainment of herself and her friends. She does not accede to that doctrine, and unless great care is taken to prevent it I am clear she will in some unguarded hour work upon his compassion'd mind, and effect her design of becoming your aunt."

Though he schemed for Emma's discomfiture, Heneage did not feel this need deprive him of her society or hospitality. Every day he was to be seen slouching across the courtyard, a tall, lanky figure whose drooping shoulders and large, beak-like nose gave him the appearance of a long-legged aquatic bird.

"You're a clever woman, Emma," he grudgingly conceded. "In the old Paddington days I never credited you with intelligence above the usual mark of a kept girl. Now your wits and your voice together should put you in the way of making a fortune as an opera singer—that is, if you avoid further adventures in love."

"Were it my ambition to be first woman in opera there's many that would be glad to engage me on my own terms. But," she said with a roguish glance, "it isn't my ambition."

The Legges left for Rome five days before Sir William and Emma started their long journey. "If Heneage anticipates a resumption of his daily visits during our stay in the Holy City he is doomed to disappointment," the Minister dryly observed. "I've enjoyed sufficient of his company for some time."

Emma fervently returned: "And to last me for ever!"

Pleasures of the impending visit to England were greatly enhanced by prospects of reunion with Romney and with Jane Farmer, Emma's companion in servitude at Chatham Place. The girls had maintained a regular correspondence; each rejoiced in the triumphs of the other. As a leading woman at Drury Lane, Jane had appeared under her maiden name until 1789, when marriage with a member of the Haymarket company transformed her into Mrs. Powell. For a wedding present Emma had sent her a hand-painted fan and the promise of a loving-cup of *Capo di Monte* to follow. The cup was large and occupied an unreasonable share of Mrs. Cadogan's trunk.

"But nothing can make up to me for the death of the Duchess of Argyll—I never had such a friend," Emma lamented. "She said if

she lived long enough for me to go to England I should stay with her and be as one of the family."

"My dear, we all mourn her loss," comforted Sir William, "but none could wish her to linger in her shattered state."

Emma, Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan set forth at daybreak on the 14th of March in a roomy coach so heavily laden that six post-horses were necessary to drag it. Vincenzo, armed with a pair of loaded pistols, sat in the rumble with a hamper of provisions sufficient to maintain life luxuriously as far as Rome. Sir William also carried fire-arms and wore his sword, precautions against attack by *banditti*, whose activities on the frontiers of the Ecclesiastical and Neapolitan States often terminated the lives of defenceless travellers.

"Less experienced Englishmen than myself court notice by engaging a guard of *Carabinieri* who scamper when attacked. Unattended, I have many times made this journey safely."

Emma's face was lit by excitement. "If we're set on, give me one of your pistols, Sir Will'um!"

Turning, he regarded her speculatively. "I wonder if your nerve would be equal to defying a resolute opponent?"

She answered decisively: "Should danger threaten, you'll see I shall go more than halfway to meet it!"



CHAPTER SIX

EMMA looked back on the visit to England as an unqualified triumph. In a few short weeks her spell had turned enemies into friends—even Mary Dickenson, Sir William's favourite niece, and quondam Maid-of-Honour to the Queen, had struck her flag, the same Mrs. Dickenson who once had the temerity to remonstrate with her uncle for associating with Greville's cast-off mistress. Ever ready to forgive and forget, Emma welcomed her old antagonist with gratitude, and soon confided her anxieties to one so eminently fitted to advise. "For I believe 'tis Queen Charlotte who opposes our marriage; Sir Will'um says the King's objections were voiced in a bantering way, as though His Majesty were keeping him on tenter-hooks o' purpose to tease."

"If that is so you have little to fear; when I was at Court I discovered that the King always pursues his own policy, the more so if faced with opposition."

Sir William took the situation philosophically, as was his wont. "The matter will settle itself one way or the other before my leave terminates, and we shall gain nothing by racking ourselves with anxiety. I'm not going to precipitate events by importuning: I know too well the number of candidates hoping to get my post in Naples to chance falling out of favour."

"But you must be valued, Sir Will'um, or the King wouldn't make you a Privy Councillor."

"As to that, it is an honour so long overdue that it may be the *vale* for a departing servant."

Emma was fêted wherever she went: at the opera, in the park, at Ranelagh and Vauxhall she was followed by admiring and curious crowds. Dressmakers exhibited white muslin gowns belted with

blue and labelled: "*Robes à la Hart*"; strangers sought introductions, among them Sir Thomas Lawrence, who wrote:—

"A particular friend of mine promised to get me introduced at Sir W.H.'s to see this wonderful woman you have doubtless heard of—Mrs. Hart."

Sir Thomas succeeded, and Emma gave him two sittings: the utmost time she could spare, as she was posing regularly for Mr. Romney.

Emma came as an angel of salvation to her old friend. She was his divine lady; she alone had power to dispel the demons of melancholy darkening and tormenting his mind. "You bring fresh life, new courage; I can work again." Romney paused, attacked by new mis-giving. He resumed in a flat, weary voice: "You must laugh at my presumption! You visit me from charity; I cannot expect you to waste time on me, you who are courted by the world."

Cut to the heart by his disordered looks and the neglect apparent in his dress and surroundings, Emma cried: "Oh, Mr. Romney! My dear Sir! I am the same Emma as you always knew! Indeed I'm not changed! 'Twill be my happiness to do what you wish, for I tell you there's nothing that will give me so much pleasure as to be your model again—if you will have me. We are lodged in Somerset Street, near enough for mother and me to slip along early, before grand folks are astir."

Her enthusiasm rekindled the dying spark of the artist's genius. He began to paint her as Joan of Arc, only to abandon the canvas in favour of a second Bacchante. Emma posed "Reading the Gazette", as Cassandra; for a Calypso and a Magdalene (commissioned by the Prince of Wales); lastly she sat in hat and redingote as "The Ambadressess".

Encouraged and revived, the artist embarked on social ventures foreign to his nature: twice he dined in Somerset Street, thrice he entertained Sir William and Emma at Cavendish Square. Eager to give friends and clients an opportunity of seeing one "superior to all womankind", he issued invitations to an evening reception. Emma exerted herself as never before. Transported by emotion, Romney sought an outlet in the early hours of morning by writing of the miracle to his friend William Hayley.

"She performed both in the serious and comic to admiration; but her *Nina* surpasses everything I ever saw, and I believe, as a piece of acting, nothing ever surpassed it. The whole company were in an agony of sorrow. Her acting is simple, grand, terrible and pathetic."

During the evening Mr. Romney's enthusiasm had been endorsed in a practical manner by Sir John Gallini (owner of the Hanover Square Rooms), who renewed his offer of two thousand a year and two benefits if Emma would engage with him. Before she had time to answer, Sir William smilingly clapped the distinguished *impresario* on the shoulder, saying: "You've lost your chance, Gallini; Mrs. Hart has engaged with me for life."

In retrospect it was the happiest night of the triumphant visit, even better than the party given in her honour by Sir William's old friend, General Conway, when she and her performance were approved by the Prince of Wales. On this occasion, as on others, her luck held—His Royal Highness had not brought his Private Secretary and Keeper of the Privy Purse, Captain John Willett Payne.

Of this danger Greville acquainted her on one of their rare *tête-à-têtes*. "I conceive it a duty to prepare you for a possible encounter, though by doing so I act treacherously to my uncle."

"'Tis no harm to Sir Will'um to warn me!" Emma retorted on a note of bravado. "And if Jack Payne and me did meet, I'm sure your uncle would be pleased to learn we had been friends!"

Raising quizzical eyebrows, Greville continued urbanely: "I must also embrace this opportunity to broach another matter of consequence—your child, Emma, now in her tenth year. For a considerable period she has lived in Manchester with a Mr. and Mrs. Blackburn, where she is boarded, educated, clothed and provided with all necessities at an annual charge that rarely falls below sixty pounds. This has been a severe tax upon me, and if you succeed in your intention of marrying Sir William, I must in justice to myself ask him to shoulder a burden that charity alone made mine."

Emma's dismay was manifest. "Oh, Greville, you can't do that! I've not told him anything about the child, and if you was to do so now he'll never trust me again. Oh, it would be cruel! cruel! Even though you don't want me to wed Sir Will'um, you could never stoop to that."

"My dear Emma, you talk wildly. I have always wished you every happiness, not the least being a desire to see you secure."

"You say that! You say that! They're only words and mean naught! What you intend is to tell about little Emy; but I warn you solemn if you break me, I'll break you too! I'll tell Sir Will'um that Emy is yours; you may wish to deny it, but you cannot, for my mother will prove I was your mistress in July 1781, and there is Mary Mudge, who knew more than you thought. I can find her," she threatened, "through Jane Powell, who knows her dwelling."

Greville flushed angrily, but his voice remained suave and he spoke with even greater precision than his wont. "'Tis a good heart which will not part with a friend in anger, Emma. As ye must recall, I never allowed myself to be irritated by your momentary passions, which generally arose from hurt pride or anxiety for the future. If you will suit your actions to the real situation you will have less difficulty in recognizing me as a friend who regards your comfort as his serious concern."

"Then you will not speak about little Emy, but let things go on as they are until I find an opportunity to tell Sir Will'um in my way?"

"I promise to take no step at present, but I cannot agree to continue indefinitely under the burden my good nature has imposed upon me."

"Let things be for a time. Please, Greville! In memory of the affection you once bore me!"

In her pleading she came close and grasped his arms. Withdrawing he answered coldly: "Very well, Emma; I will do as you ask."

It was the first display of open hostility Greville had evinced, hitherto antagonism had been veiled beneath a show of solicitude. On the night of their arrival he had dined in Somerset Street; Emma, nervously dreading the meeting, sailed majestically into the room as the soup was cooling.

"Greville, dear Greville," she cried in well-simulated delight. "How happy we are to see you! Would you believe it? Since we left Naples Sir Will'um and me have talked of little else but this joyful moment."

Emma wore a *décolleté* dress of silver tissue trimmed with Rutland gauze, a *chiffonet* of Italian crêpe pearls and lilac feathers, and all her diamonds. Divining her need of assurance, Sir William smiled.

"Well, Charles, what do ye think of my Grecian?"

Greville bowed. "In every way Emma has fulfilled her early promise."

"I know I'm improved," she candidly confessed; "yet I like to

be told so. But what we wish to learn is about you, and the house you are building next to Sir Will'um's brother. Tell me, is his daughter still singing as well as before? There was some English officers came to Naples, and they did nothing but talk of Miss Elizabeth Hamilton's singing, until they heard me. Not knowing she was Sir Will'um's niece, they then said she was a fool at it compared with me." Emma's eyes were bright as stars, her cheeks were flushed; she signalled to Vincenzo to re-fill her glass.

"Charles has been reproaching me about our house, Em; he says we should have separated in London, conventions being more strictly observed here than in Naples."

"We couldn't do it; and why should we?" She turned her vivid face to Greville. "You can't think two people that has lived five years with all the domestic happiness that's possible can separate; two persons that knows no other comfort but each other's company, which I assure you is the case with us, though you bachelors don't understand it!"

Looking nettled, Greville replied coldly: "I merely express an opinion which will be that of the fashionable world."

"I agree with Emma," said Sir William—"twould be nonsense to alter our way of life, which is common knowledge to many."

"Besides, I don't mean to attract notice. I wish to be an example of good conduct, and to show the world that a pretty woman is not always a fool."

Though amused by Emma's aggressive attitude, Sir William chided her when they went to bed.

"I know," she answered ruefully; "something forces me to act bold and contrary if I'm disliked."

"But Charles expresses for you the warmest sentiments; over our wine he told me he was astonished by your beauty, despite being prepared for something extraordinary."

In July Emma remained in London while Sir William inspected, under Greville's guidance, developments at Milford. Mrs. Cadogan was also in South Wales, staying with Dr. Cadogan and his family at Cowbridge, from whence, by way of Aberystwyth, she intended proceeding by slow stages to Chester.

For the first time in many years Emma thought about her child, not with maternal yearning, but with pity and some compunction. She recalled tales of children taken to nurse and sold to chimney-sweeps or brothel-keepers; had Greville made certain that Emy was

safe? . . . Maybe she had died and the Blackburns were keeping the money for themselves. . . . Greville must give the address, and the child's granny should go and see how things were, so she should. . . .

At the first opportunity Emma accosted Greville; he was reluctant, but eventually supplied Mrs. Blackburn's direction: "Near the Palace Inn in Market Street Lane". Writing to Mrs. Cadogan as explicitly as time permitted, Emma felt at ease. Running downstairs she met Vincenzo, sent to remind her that Sir William was already in the phaeton.

"I dislike being kept waiting, Emma," the Minister testily remarked; "punctuality *was* one of your virtues, but you are becoming as careless as a woman of fashion!"

"I'm sorry," she answered. "I'll not err that way again."

Sir William drove across Portman Square and out into Edgware Road through a lane fragrant with honeysuckle and wild roses. They were on their way to stay at Stanmore with the Marquis of Abercorn.

Every cottage, hedge and tree along the road held a memory for Emma. Here, on the first milestone from Tyburn turnpike, she used to sit on summer evenings waiting for Greville. . . . There were the meadows where mushrooms grew for Greville's breakfast. In the blackthorn bush overhanging the watertrough Greville had found a young cuckoo in a hedge-sparrow's nest. . . . Oh God, would it never be possible to forget? . . .

At Paddington Sir William made a detour to view the new Church.

"'Tis much admired, and pretends to be erected after a Greek model, but in fact is a nondescript building destitute of taste."

Emma looked at a square edifice decorated with four heavy porticos and crowned with a small cupola, standing about eighty yards south of the former site. "I liked the countrified church best," she said, while her eyes wandered to Edgware Row.

"So did I," said Sir William. "Look! There's your old house up for sale."

"Yes; there it is," she agreed in sprightly tones.

Emma had not entered an English country mansion since the days she had lived dishonourably at Uppark. A bigot might admit no difference between her past and present situation, designating as fallacious all marks of respect. Probing no farther than the surface, she eagerly gave her hand to the Marquis of Abercorn, who raised it to his lips with grace and gallantry uncommon to his race. His dark complexion, coupled with an arrogant solemnity of manner and a

dramatically dictatorial tone, had caused Brinsley Sheridan to nickname him "Don Whiskerandos", after Tilburnia's lover in *The Critic*. The Marquis bore a strong likeness to his cousin, Sir William; even more striking was his resemblance to the beautiful portrait of James V in the Duke of Hamilton's apartments at Holyrood House.

Looking at his kinsman and Emma, Sir William involuntarily ejaculated: "My God, what a pair ye make!"

"No mortal could equal Mrs. Hart!"

"Yet she encourages me, whose burnt countenance better compares with Apollyon than with Apollo, to believe myself her match!"

"Have your wishes yet been met at Windsor?"

"All is silence, and my leave draws rapidly to an end."

To render the visit agreeable to his distinguished cousin, the Marquis of Abercorn had invited to the Priory the Rev. Louis Dutens, who, when *chargé d'affaires* at Turin, had become a close friend of Sir William's. The rest of the household comprised Lady Cecil Hamilton, three subdued little girls named Harriet, Betty and Maria, and the Marchioness of Abercorn, whose cough rang, lonely and despairing, through the silent corridors.

The house was sumptuously appointed, the weather perfect, nothing could exceed the warmth of the welcome accorded to Emma, yet she was not happy. "I wish we'd not said six days," she confided to Sir William; "ever since I crossed the threshold I've felt oppressed and mournful; frightened, too, like some poor creature in a trap."

"My dear Em, how often must I chide you for giving rein to the strange fancies in your mind?"

"They're not fancies, but truth." She added irrelevantly: "I can't abide Lady Cecil Hamilton. What relation is she to the Marquis?"

"Opinion is divided, the charitable contend that His Lordship does no more than his duty by the youngest daughter of his late uncle, who, in his lifetime, had little more than his stipend as Canon of Windsor."

"Was her father an Earl?" asked Emma, who had learnt much about the peerage and courtesy titles.

"No, a mere commoner—the Rev. Dr. George Hamilton. Lady Cecil owes her elevation entirely to the solicitude of our host, who applied to his friend Pitt to procure for her the rank and precedence of an Earl's daughter."

"And did the King consent?" Emma demanded in shocked tones.

"Not without a struggle; Charles II himself might have hesitated

at such a proposition. The request ran counter to all forms and usages of Court etiquette; the young lady is remarkably attractive; she has four elder sisters; and the Queen suspected and disapproved of the motive behind his Lordship's demand."

"If the King and Queen will make a noblewoman out of a nobody, 'tis cruel they won't agree to your wedding me."

"You forget the difference in rank; I am a grandson of a Duke of Hamilton; the Marquis of Abercorn is the head and the representative of the Dukes of Hamilton in male succession. His landed property is immense; the First Minister is known to labour under heavy pecuniary embarrassments—'tis natural to assume that friends will assist each other by the means at their command."

At dinner the Marquis reverted to Sir William's affairs. "I am much surprised at the delay; permission for the marriage should have been granted on your arrival."

"I hoped for it," Sir William acknowledged.

"Well, we must jog His Majesty's memory." Leaning back in his chair, the Marquis of Abercorn held up his glass so that the sunlight, shining through the ruby wine, cast a rosy spot on the charming face of Lady Cecil.

"My experience of our Court is, that unless steps are taken from outside, matters are allowed to slide until they disappear into oblivion. If I want anything, I ask forthright, and continue asking till I get it. Now you, Hamilton, are too much of a diplomat; too prone to rely upon negotiation at the expense of action."

"And you, my dear Abercorn, forget that in order to retain my Ministerial post at Naples, which on the whole suits me very well, I must be diplomatic."

"Nonsense; a bold course is always best!"

"That's what I say," Emma supplemented, and blushed, catching Lady Cecil's quizzing glance.

"The vote of the majority secures the measure! To-morrow we will drive to town. While I invoke some influence at Westminster, you, Hamilton, will take a fresh set of my horses from Grosvenor Square and proceed, in a firm frame of mind, to Windsor."

"Though confessing to some misgivings, I see that your plan has the possibility of succeeding."

In the evening Emma performed her attitudes and sang to Louis Dutén's accompaniment on the harpsichord; she was applauded, but **knew** that she sang in a flat and listless manner. Hardly had she sat

down than Lady Cecil Hamilton sprang up and thrust a bundle of music upon the Frenchman. What she lacked in voice was made up for in confidence. With an air of challenge she essayed *Nina*, Emma's favourite rôle from Paisiello's opera. Fair, dainty, alluring, she warbled without expression in schoolgirl Italian: "*Tre Giorni son che Nina in letto se ne sta*", to the enchantment of her cousin, who applauded far more loudly than he had Emma's masterly performance.

Emma could hardly stifle her rage. "*Nina* is *comédie larmoyante*, not an English ballad," she said scathingly.

"Of course; I sang it in Italian. My accent is very pure."

Sir William gave Emma a warning look, but she was not completely deterred. "Paisiello rehearsed me himself. Indeed, he took the Banti and me alternately."

"An Italian *Mæstro di Capella* is really necessary where a good voice is concerned," the Marquis observed, with his dark eyes hungrily fixed on his cousin's pretty face. "I think I must ask ye to look out for such a one, Hamilton, when ye return to Naples. My three daughters will soon require tuition; as yet they reveal no trace of anything melodious, but I presume a competent man can develop their vocal chords sufficiently for drawing-room performances."

It was clear he was not thinking of his children. . . .

That night Emma slept badly, oppressed by heavy melancholy, unyielding as the sultry air imprisoned in the low, panelled room. The windows were wide open, showing summer lightning flickering across the sky and Jupiter hanging steady and brilliant as a celestial lamp. In the woods an owl shrieked and crooned; a duck splashed in the lake; the stable dog barked and rattled its chain. Indoors the old house hugged the secret sounds of darkness—ticking clocks, creaking woodwork, the sharp teeth of a mouse in the wainscoting; a woman's laugh and a man's voice muted by tenderness; the sharp stab of a hectic cough from a room in a distant wing.

At breakfast Sir William was concerned to see Emma's pale face. "My darling, I've not known ye so wan since those first months in Naples. And I flattered myself that the prospect of settling our affairs as we wish would give you joy."

"It does, it does; but I don't want you to go and leave me here!"

"My dear, I shall be back to-morrow, and the hope that we will soon be one flesh should console you for a temporary parting."

Emma watched the coach disappear through the trees with feelings of profound depression; Lady Cecil did not rise until noon,

Louis Dutens had gone in the coach to town. Wandering aimlessly towards the lake, she came upon Lady Harriet Hamilton making a stiff little bouquet of sweet-william, mignonette and bachelor's buttons. "For my mamma," she explained. "I make them so and hang them like a candelabrum above her head, for she lies on a board, marm, because her back might snap."

"Wouldn't she prefer roses—the red ones that smell so sweet?"

"She hates them—Lady Cecil likes roses, and my papa gathers her a bunch every morning. Will you come and see my mamma? I told her how lovely you are and that you sing like an angel, and she said she would like to hear you, as she will soon be able to make comparison."

As Emma walked towards the invalid's room her despondency increased; the atmosphere was heavy as substance and vibrant with emotion.

The Marchioness lay on a padded board with a horsehair pillow under her neck. Silky brown ringlets tumbled upon her shoulders and framed her dark, ravaged beauty. Looking down into the proud, rebellious face, Emma saw fierce passion burning behind the sombre eyes.

"'Tis an event, Madam, for me to receive a visitor other than the parson and his wife, who come to prepare me for the hereafter." Speaking in a hollow whisper, her eyes raked Emma up and down. "I see you are fair—I might have guessed. Women of your colouring are a menace to society." She started to cough but stifled it with her handkerchief. "I've two harlots in my house now; I heard you both screaming last night while the men applauded."

"You didn't hear me—I've never screamed in my life nor run from anything!"

"Perhaps you call it singing? My little girl said you had a voice like an angel's! Good God! Even children are bewitched by your evil spells."

"I'll not stay to be called names," said Emma; "indeed, I'd not remain another minute in the house if I was free to leave it. If you wasn't so ill I'd rate you for what you've said!"

The sick woman clutched Emma's dress. "Don't go! Don't go! I didn't mean it. I'm so tormented! I wasn't always so, indeed I wasn't." Panting and spent, she lay with her eyes closed, but her thin hands still held Emma's gown. "I was sweet-tempered and trusting; I

wanted everyone to have the happiness that I believed was mine. Then I was betrayed." Suddenly she looked up with a wild gleam in her eyes. "Where's that Jezebel?"

"I don't know who you mean!"

"Pretty Cecil Hamilton, my husband's mistress, ennobled and presented at St. James's as *My Lady!*"

"I never heard of her before last night, and know naught!"

"Ah! I see you hang together, and no wonder, for I hear you also will soon be *My Lady!* But it doesn't matter, for here comes my little girl, who can tell me all I wish to know!" As she spoke she held out her arms to Maria, who had come quietly into the room. The child ran forward and knelt beside the bed, cuddling close to the invalid. "Oh, mother loves you, loves you!" the woman moaned. "Who will understand you when I have gone? Now tell me, did father give pretty cousin Cecil those lovely red roses again this day?"

Unnoticed, Emma quitted the room and ran along the corridor and downstairs. In the garden she found Lady Cecil reading the second volume of *Cecilia* and eating sugar-plums.

"So here you are! I thought you'd gone with the men; I imagine their company is more to your taste than mere *female* society."

"I've endured enough incivility for one day; if you don't behave agreeable I shall go back to town. You won't find that easy to explain, so you'd better act kindly for your own sake as well as mine."

Lady Cecil looked at her speculatively. "I like spirit," she observed, "and really I only quiz for lack of anything better to do. Come now, I'll tease no more, and we will be the best of friends."

"I'm not one to make friends to order," Emma retorted.

After three days' absence the Marquis of Abercorn returned to The Priory with his guest. "Our wishes are realized, Em," announced Sir William. "In effect His Majesty says: 'Marry whom you please—as a private gentleman'."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, 'tis too good to be true!"

"I feared you might grieve over the qualification. Do you appreciate it? Sir William Hamilton may take Emma Hart as the wife of his bosom, but His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary must be celibate. 'Tis a proviso of no little humour, doubtless devised in all seriousness by the Queen. Its purport is to debar you from presentation at Court, but that is nullified so far as Naples is concerned by Queen Carolina's willingness to receive you as my wife or as *Madame l'Envoyée à Naples.*"

"So long as I can be wed to you, Sir Will'um, all else can go to the devill!"

"Bravely said, my darling!"

"I meant it, Sir Will'um."

The banns were to be called for the first time on the 21st of August and the marriage was to take place at Marylebone Church on Tuesday the 6th of September, with the Marquis of Abercorn and Louis Dutens as witnesses. "In less delicate circumstances I should have asked Charles to act," Sir William observed.

The remainder of Emma's stay at Stanmore passed happily. "Indeed, 'twould be impossible to be out of humour now I have the near prospect of being your wife." Only in leisure moments did her thoughts revert to the invalid whose cough rang mournfully on the sultry air. "I'm often at war with myself over Lord Abercorn, one moment half in love with him—yes I own it, Sir Will'um—the next hating him for acting unfaithful."

"Be not censorious, my love, remembering that the heart is a sensitive instrument prone to change its measure with the beat of time. I have told ye before that my study of antiquities has kept me in constant thought of the perpetual fluctuation of everything and taught me that the art of living is to accept and enjoy the love and pleasure that the passing moment offers, and not to repine when it has gone."

"Do you mean, Sir Will'um, that if, years hence, I was so ungrateful as to love and yield to another man, you would not care?"

"I should care, sweet Em, but I would not hold you guilty nor punish you for a passion you could not help."

From Stanmore they went back to London for a week, before starting on a round of visits beginning at Downton Castle, Richard Payne Knight's splendid mansion near Ludlow, thence through Hereford and Gloucester to Wiltshire to stay with the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton and to Fonthill, where Sir William's notorious young kinsman, William Beckford, author of *Vathek*, had temporarily returned from exile in Paris.

"Well, my sweet Em, I see all goes on perfectly right for you with my friends," remarked Sir William as their coach carried them towards London. "I never doubted your gaining every soul you approach. Knight is a fine fellow, and it was worth going half across England to secure such a sensible friend, and Lord Pembroke, by giving you a mare from his own stables, went out of his way to show you his regard."

"I'll confess now that I was fearful of failure."

"You are wise enough to see the line it is proper for you to take, and I have not the least doubt you will continue following it rigorously."

Accompanied by Jane Powell, Emma went to Marylebone Church to hear her banns read for the first time. It was so long since she had thought of herself as Emy Lyon that the name fell strangely on her ears. Clutching Jane's arm, she whispered: "Oh God! For a moment I thought the parson had made a mistake!"

On the previous night Emma and Sir William were entertained at Queensberry House, Richmond. The Duke had invited distinguished neighbours to hear Mrs. Hart in selections from Italian Opera and to see her attitudes—"A beautiful performance, amusing to the most ignorant and highly interesting to lovers of art". The company included the Neapolitan Minister and his wife—Prince and Princess Castalcicala—Lady Diana Beauclerk, the Earl of Dysart, Horace Walpole, a number of French *émigrés*, among them the Comtesse du Barry, in England to recover her diamonds stolen by four Jews seized in London and committed to Newgate. "Even if I get back my jewels," she remarked, "they will likely be taken from me again by the National Assembly!"

"Will you return to France?" Sir William inquired.

"Ah, yes! What else is there for me to do? My friends are there, my beautiful château and estate is near Marly, my sentiments and memories are bound up in Paris."

"Madame, by returning to the land of liberty you run the risk of losing it."

"Yes, yes, conditions in my poor country are in a sorry pass. The attempted escape from the Tuileries of the royal family and their recapture at Varennes has accelerated the danger of their position and inflamed the revolutionary ardour of the people. Alas! I cannot foresee a happy end."

"'Tis to be feared that Louis precipitated his own ruin by his rash flight on June the 20th!"

"And their sufferings during their five days of freedom! Do you know, Monsieur, the Queen's black hair turned white during that short interval?"

The Comtesse du Barry retained but a shadow of her former beauty, and no trace of her former powers. Her hair, dressed high and frizzed into a variety of curls and ringlets, was intermingled with feathers,

diamond pins and gauze. A petticoat of gold tissue, falling over an enormous hoop, was trimmed with gold fringe headed and festooned with embroidered bulrushes; the body and train of gold cloth was ornamented with gold cords. Round her neck hung a large miniature of Louis XV set in a laurel wreath of emeralds.

Mr. Walpole pleaded for the privilege of presenting Emma to "the late Queen of France". The royal mistress who had ruled a King and a country glanced with kindly toleration at the belauded beauty who was content to wed an ageing diplomat. "Your *tableaux vivants* are charming, Madame, how shall I say?—so *spirituel*? I wish I had performed in a similar manner when I was young—perhaps as Psyche with her mirror—or as Venus rising from the waves. For I was very beautiful, Madame. . . ."

Nettled, but determined to be polite, Emma murmured: "But you are still beautiful."

"Ah, *non! non!* Distinguished, perhaps. . . . Yesterday I celebrated my forth-fifth birthday; no woman can be forty-five and beautiful."

Meanwhile Emma was accorded whimsical approval by Horace Walpole. "Well, Hamilton, I hear ye are about to marry your nymph of the attitudes, and I don't wonder you're bewitched. Oh! but she sings admirably, is an excellent *buffa* and an astonishing tragedian. Her singing of *Nina* was the highest perfection."

Sir William had become complacent to praise. "She really is an extraordinary being," he agreed, "and most grateful to me for having saved her from the precipice into which she must have inevitably fallen. It has often been remarked that a reformed rake makes a good husband. Why not *vice versa*?"

Mrs. Cadogan returned to town a week before the wedding. Sir William dined at Parsloe's with the Dilettanti Society, Emma and her mother supped alone. There was so much to say they knew not where to begin.

"Tell me first about going to Mrs. Blackburn's—is it a proper place for the child to be? And what did you think of little Emy? Is she like me or anyone else?"

"Not like you, Emma. She's but an ordinary little thing, shy and well behaved. 'Twas hard to get anything out of her. I'm sure she's kindly treated, and she's learnt the same as Mrs. Blackburn's own children."

"But, Mam, doesn't she favour anyone?"

"Well, in a way she's like Sarah Reynolds, good and patient-looking, not one to attract the opposite sex. Now, the Connor children are something very different; I was surprised. Sarah, the second girl, who is going on for fourteen, might be a lady, she's got such an air. The money we give pays for their schooling at a new seminary started by two maiden ladies who've taken that old ramshackle house between William Boydell's and Ewloe Castle."

"Is Emy clever?"

"She's learning French, music and dancing as well as ordinary subjects; and she can do filigree work out of silver wire. Very pretty. I told Mrs. Blackburn to allow the child to make a box for you, Emma. 'Twill go down in the bill."

"Will it cost much?"

"About two pounds, she said."

"Greville will pay for it!"

"Do him no harm. I wish you could hear Mary Connor reading aloud—it's beautiful the way she brings out the expression. All those Connors are something uncommon—like you, Emma. You must help them on."

"How many are there now?"

"Six: Mary, Sarah, Cecilia, Mary Ann, Charles and Eliza."

"Is Uncle Michael put away?"

"No, he's been at large over eighteen months."

"'Tis a pity; they'll only have more children."

"I think they've done breeding. Eliza, the baby, is nearly four; your Aunt Sarah's getting past it."

"And Granny?"

"Just the same, but more troubled by rheumatics. She's still making a bit out of hair-work."

Mrs. Cadogan was much provoked because Sir William maintained secrecy over the time of the wedding, inviting her only to the breakfast being given at noon by the Marquis of Abercorn.

The ceremony took place at ten o'clock; from Marylebone Church Emma drove alone in a hackney-coach to her last sitting with Romney for his portrait of "The Ambassadors". Leaning out of the window, she waved to Sir William, the Marquis of Abercorn, Louis Dutens and the Rev. Edward Barry, grouped outside the door of the small, barn-like church standing with its gable end to the country road.

Emma's wedding day was bland with the orange light of early autumn. Yellow daisies nodded between cottage palings, apples were

ruddy inside the red-brick wall of the 'Rose of Normandy'. Jostling along a narrow lane skirting Marylebone Gardens, she had a wide view of cornfields and pastures extending to the new road; of houses rising amid scaffolding; of cows standing knee-deep in the Cockney Ladle. Stumbling over bricks and rubble, the horses drew the coach to the smooth pavement of Harley Street. Emma was lost in a beatitude of thankfulness and peace. *My Lady!* Never again to be insecure, slighted or rated no higher than a girl of the town. . . . Oh, God, is it possible? . . . Can it be that poor Emy Lyon is restored to innocence and virtue? . . . With rank and riches, honour and serenity? . . . Never, never can Sir Will'um be repaid for his wonderful goodness. . . .

The artist awaited her in his studio. The portrait depicted Emma in travelling dress seated sideways with her hands loosely clasped on the arm of her chair. Her head was turned towards her left shoulder, her face gazed in grave serenity at the beholder.

"Oh, Mr. Romney, you've made me look as I'd like to be: a gentlewoman who is sure of herself."

"Emma, Emma, I have glorified nothing! That is what you *are!* I can't bear to hear you belittle yourself. You who are akin to the angels—my divine lady!" Taking her hand, he held it to his lips, pressing upon it greedy, anguished kisses. "Oh, my dear, what shall I do when you are gone? How shall I go on without you?"

"Come with me!" she pleaded again.

He answered: "I cannot!"

Standing on the step, he watched her drive away. Long after the coach had crossed the square and the dust had settled, he remained listening to the wheels rumbling into the distance.



CHAPTER SEVEN

EMMA left Sir William in the great hall of Palazzo Reale and climbed alone up the branching marble staircase to the Queen's apartments. Lady Hamilton was to be received in private, a trusted pursuivant from one Queen to another. Against her heart Emma could feel the sharp edges of the packet entrusted to her keeping by Marie Antoinette in her bedchamber at the Tuileries.

Entering the royal presence, Emma courtseyed to the ground and, in accordance with Sir William's instructions, waited to be addressed. The Queen of Naples rose, and extended a gracious hand. "My dear Miledi, to this pleasant moment I have long looked forward; indeed, I feel we are no strangers, so often have I heard you admired and commended for your discretion and accomplishments."

"May it please Your Majesty, I am happy you have heard well of me."

"Many of my poor subjects have occasion for gratitude to you and your good mother, and now I hear from the dear Chevalier that I am indebted for a letter brought from Paris?"

"I was to give it, Madame, 'with love from the Queen of France'."

Maria Carolina received the message with emotion. Expecting to be dismissed, Emma glanced towards the door. "No, no, Miledi, I must hear more. You will tell me how my sister looked, if she and her family appeared well and of the conditions imposed upon them by that vile National Assembly. Come, we will sit; you will forget I am a Queen, and think of me only as an anxious woman desiring news of a dear sister in grievous danger."

"The danger is past," cried Emma, sitting down on a gilt chair opposite to the Queen's. "I talked with many Frenchmen, high and low, and to tradespeople who know most about popular opinion, and all said the Revolution ended on the 15th of September when King Louis ratified the new Constitution."

"I doubt it! I doubt it!"

"All the time we was in Paris it was a city of rejoicing. At night thousands of lamps illumined the Tuileries, and the fountains and flower-beds were a blaze of coloured lights. Outside the palace crowds shouted: '*Vive le Roi!*' and '*Vive la Reine!*' The populace would have the King and Queen and Dauphin drive through the streets, and they cried again: '*Vive le Roi! Vive la Reine!*' and '*Chapeaux bas!*'"

"'*Chapeaux bas!*' Fine irony indeed! On the fatal 15th of September the King was forced to stand hat in hand when he surrendered his hereditary rights to the 'deputies', who sat with heads covered!"

"'Twas an outrage," Emma agreed; "but 'twas said the deputies regretted their discourtesy, for as soon as the King took the oath the whole assembly rose applauding, and they formed a triumphal procession to escort him back to the Tuileries."

"Yes, back to the Tuileries! A derelict palace, for years the home of disreputable and indigent people. I hear the very floors are rotten, and crumbling walls are concealed by improvised hangings. Did you see the royal apartments?"

"The Queen's rooms on the ground floor face the garden; a great antechamber where meals were served led to a billiard-room and a salon, and finally to the Queen's own room. Her bed stood in an alcove formed by four hollow pillars; she showed me that each was large enough to conceal a man. In the thickness of the walls was a very dark secret staircase leading up to the Dauphin's room exactly above. The King was on the first floor, and all the apartments were connected by these narrow stairs."

"It sounds like a prison, it *is* a prison! Does my sister show the strain of three years of Revolution?"

"No, indeed, she looked young and beautiful. She had come from attending Mass with the King in their private chapel, and was richly dressed; but the King looks older than he is. He told Sir Will'um he suffered for lack of exercise."

"The King is fat, I suppose? 'Tis a characteristic of all Bourbons!"

"Yes," Emma admitted; "but I thought perhaps the appearance was due to a white-embroidered waistcoat that reached from his neck almost to his thighs in the old fashion."

"Ah, no! All Bourbons are corpulent!"

Queen Carolina's condescension did not end with this interview; when the Court moved to Caserta, Emma was made as welcome to the palace as the British Minister. "Royalty," Emma remarked to Sir

William, "seem no different from their subjects, except that they take more pains to be civil." In making the comparison she had in mind Mrs. Heneage Leggé, whose wanderings in Italy had again brought her to Naples. Of all the English travellers, she alone refused to countenance Lady Hamilton.

"This morning I retaliated by informing her of the Court dinner their Majesties are giving in the New Year for Prince Augustus, to which only peers and peeresses and their sons and daughters are invited. This made Mrs. Legge look very sour," chuckled Sir William, "though she protested she would rather be 'at the *head* of her own order than at the *tail* of the nobility'."

Seeking escape from wet and stormy weather prevailing in Florence and Rome, more than a hundred English travellers had converged upon Naples, only to encounter similar conditions, but in greater variety. Storms of thunder and lightning accompanied by torrents of rain continued for hours without intermission; in the mornings heavy mists obscured everything but the mountain-tops. Sir William reported that the barometer never stood for twenty-four hours at the same point. One by one the visitors were smitten with colds and took to their beds, among them Prince Augustus Frederick, sixth son of George III, condemned by his father's orders to live at Portici instead of in Naples. Sulphurous smoke rolling down from Vesuvius, mingling with the mist hanging over the lava wastes of Herculaneum, created conditions extremely injurious to a youth with delicate lungs. Sir William was much perturbed, and made repeated journeys from Caserta to the Prince's villa.

"Prince Augustus is living entirely on potatoes and water," he reported to Emma and Mrs. Cadogan; "it certainly appears nourishing, because he is quite a Colossus, but I cannot think it a suitable diet for a boy of seventeen."

"Why," asked Emma, "does he eat so strangely when everything is to be had?"

"He declares all other foods at Portici taste of pumice. I'm inclined to believe him, because the smell of aqueous vapour is very penetrating."

On the fifth day of the Prince's illness Sir William decided to place the distinguished invalid in Mrs. Cadogan's care at Palazzo Sessa. When the removal was accomplished the Minister returned to Emma at Caserta. "I left your mother enchanted; she can now claim to have

tended all grades of mankind from beggars to a prince of the blood royal."

The Countess of Sutherland, the Countess of Plymouth, the Countess of Malmesbury and Lady Carnegie, all drove out to Caserta to visit Emma. On December 20th she wrote to Romney:—

"I have been received with open arms by all the Neapolitans of both sexes, by all the foreigners of every distinction. I have been presented to the Queen of Naples by her own desire, she has shewn me all sorts of kind and affectionate attentions; in short I am the happiest woman in the world.

Sir William is fonder of me every day, and I hope will have no cause to repent of what he has done, for I feel so grateful to him that I think I shall never be able to make him amends for his goodness to me. But why do I tell you this? you know me well enough; you were the first dear friend I open'd my heart to, you ought to know me, for you have seen and discoursed with me in my poorer days, you have known me in my poverty and prosperity. . . . Rejoice with me, my dear sir, my friend, my more than father, believe me I am still that same Emma you knew me. If I could forget for a moment what I was, I ought to suffer. Command me in anything I can do for you here; believe me, I shall have a real pleasure. Come to Naples, and I will be your model, anything to induce you to come, that I may have an opportunity to show my gratitude to you. . . . Give my love to Mr. Hayly, tell him I shall be glad to see him in Naples. I am always reading his *Triumphs of Temper*; it was that that made me Lady H., for, God knows, I had for 5 years enough to try my temper, and I am afraid if it had not been for the good example *Serena* taught me, my girdle would have bust, and if it had I had been undone, for Sir W. minds temper more than beauty. . . ."

At Sir William's bidding she wrote by the same post to congratulate the Marquis of Abercorn on his impending marriage with Lady Cecil Hamilton.

"Though in doing it I feel like a traitor to his poor wife, who's scarce cold in her grave."

"Come, come, Emmal! The Marchioness died a week after our wedding, and we've been man and wife nearly four months."

"Well, I say the 4th of January is too soon to give another her title, and I declare I got more satisfaction yesterday from preparing John

Graeffe's simple wedding breakfast, than I would from *eating* the banquet for the bride in Grosvenor Square!"

"What a partisan you are, my dear!"

On the previous day Miss Carry Dodsworth of Chester left the British Minister's house to wed John Graeffe in the royal chapel of the palace; afterwards the bride and groom returned to eat *Capitone*, cold capon, plum pudding and *susamiello* to the haunting Christmas *lamento* played outside the windows by a wild-looking pipe and flautist from the Abruzzo. Sir William toasted the newly married pair in *lachrimae Christi*. "Which," he afterwards observed to Emma, "proves me uncommonly magnanimous, considering the trouble Graeffe's debts to Banks and to Malcolm caused me in England."

"He should repay Sir Joseph Banks for the money lent, but as to the seeds and gardening tools from the nurserymen, they was for the English garden, so Messrs. Malcolm ought to claim from their Majesties."

"There's the rub; the King says he entrusted the money to Graeffe, who declares it was sent. Between ourselves, sweet Em, I suspect our bridegroom of being a plausible young man."

In the New Year the Court returned to Naples. Etiquette obliged the King to remain for the royal banquet; at dawn the next morning he set out for his hunting-ground at Persano, accompanied by Sir William (who had a cold and went with reluctance), a numerous suite, huntsmen, lurchers and mastiffs. Left to herself, Emma divided her time between music, languages and entertaining in a modest manner. Prince Augustus still occupied a suite at the legation and Mrs. Cadogan's attention. As a means of strengthening his lungs, Dr. Cirillo prescribed singing under Aprile's direction. The Prince was soon enchanted by his own voice and monopolized Emma's harpsichord.

"'Tis all very well," she complained, "but while he's getting a voice I shall lose mine."

"Use your harp, 'twill do just as well for a short time," answered her mother.

"Not for practice."

"Well, I'm sorry, Emma, but you can't cross our King's son."

Informed by the Court physician of Lady Hamilton's deprivation, Queen Carolina offered the use of a harpsichord in a secluded apartment, an act of kindness that cemented Emma's warm admiration. At the end of the practice it became a custom to visit the Queen's boudoir

for a glass of wine; sometimes Emma remained while a message was dispatched to Palazzo Sessa commanding Mrs. Cadogan to come and make tea. "Me and Mother," wrote Emma to Sir William, "are quite *en famille* with the Queen."

Emma learnt of anxieties racking crowned heads. "Affairs are going from bad to worse in France," lamented the ruling woman of Naples; "massacres are becoming increasingly common; the new Legislative Assembly is more republican than its predecessor. One does not know how to act for the best. When my brother, the Emperor of Austria, met the King of Prussia at Pilnitz last August and called upon European governments to oppose French terrorism (which compromises the honour and security of all sovereigns), their endeavours had no such calming effect on the French as we hoped. In confidence I tell you, Miledi, that a far more binding pact is in preparation, rendered necessary by the dangers of the time. The Emperor, in concert with the King of Prussia, is determined to prevent the spread of revolution to other States. Spain, Sardinia, ourselves, even Russia and the Pope, bind ourselves by treaty to stand together against this cursed doctrine of the 'Rights of Man'."

Every day a train of mules reached the palace bearing game slaughtered on the previous day at Persano. The courtyard was filled with limp bodies of wild boars, deer, stags, porcupines, hares, foxes and birds of many varieties; those which had fallen to the King's gun were distinguished by red labels. Wrapped in a cloak, Queen Carolina picked her way amid the carnage, deciding upon recipients for the royal largess. Prince Augustus, the most important visitor to the Kingdom, was overwhelmed by the gifts.

"Faith," he said, looking distastefully at a massive boar, "no man can be more appreciative than myself of His Majesty's kind intention, but I confess I'd feel greater relish for a present in the vegetable way."

Towards the end of January the hunters returned. Sir William immediately set to work on the proofs of his latest volume on Etruscan vases. Emma had more invitations than she could accept: Lady Hamilton was the fashion, no party could succeed unless she was present. "I never thought I could be so happy," was her constant refrain.

No presentiment warned her to be ready. . . .

Sir William came hurriedly from his cabinet. "The mail has come," he said, "bringing a letter and a most peculiar bill from Charles. It comprises a half-year's account for board and sundries for Miss Hart,

amounting to £32 11s., which Charles informs me my bankers have paid. I gather you know all about the matter, so ye'd better read the documents and explain their meaning to me."

Emma was overwhelmed. Trembling she picked up Greville's letter; the words danced before her eyes, but feeling Sir William's gaze, she forced herself to read:

"I have taken a liberty with you, and I communicate it to you instead of Ly. H., because I knew it would give her some embarrassment, and she might imagine it unkind in me so soon to trouble you about her protégé. I had settled the Midsummer half year: and I intended to have done the same at Xmas if I could have kept my account at Mr. Hoare's within bounds. I have overdrawn him £150, and my next receipt is in May. It will not, therefore, be taken ill of you that I have given Blackburn an order on Messrs. Ross & Ogilvie for £32 11 s. in this form:—

' £32: 11s.

January 10, 1792.

Please to pay to Mr. Blackburn or Bearer thirty-two pounds 11s. on account of Sir Wm. Hamilton, the particulars of which demand I have transmitted to him at Naples. *C. F. G.*'

I do not mean this necessary step to be concealed from Ly. H., but I should be sorry that she considered it unkindly. . . ."

On a separate sheet of paper was a long statement of charges including a "filigree box for Mrs. Hart by order of Mrs. Cadogan: £2 12s. 6d."

Emma sighed and looked up at Sir William.

"Why did ye not tell me about this before?" he asked. "Charles appears to think me fully informed."

"I told him I would tell you—I suppose it slipped my memory."

"Well, who is this girl, that is known to everyone but myself?"

"She's an orphan, a distant relative," Emma improvised. "I hoped, given a little time, I should be able to pay for her out of my allowance."

"Tell me—has Charles supported this child ever since you left him?"

"Yes."

"Did you and he ever see her?"

"Oh yes; she was with me at Parkgate that summer you and Greville went away together; then I brought her back to Edgware Row, but I wasn't allowed to keep her."

"And that rendered you unhappy?"

"Indeed I was near heartbroken."

Had Emma glanced in his direction, she would have seen a wry look of compassion on Sir William's face. "Nevertheless, 'twas very generous of Charles to maintain this strange child on his slender means. A niece, I think ye said, of Mrs. Cadogan's?"

Without considering, Emma accepted the suggestion. "Aunt Elizabeth's child."

"How came she to be called Hart?"

"Greville thought 'twas wisest."

It was Sir William's turn to sigh. "I see. Had Charles been better situated I am sure he would not have failed in his obligation; as things are, I must shoulder it for him." The Minister turned to quit the room, but came back and placed his hand on Emma's downcast head. "Don't trouble, my dear, I will attend to it."

Neither broached the matter again. Sir William was as kind as before, but some of his buoyancy had gone; now and again Emma surprised a wistful expression on his weather-worn face, a look that forbade facile words of affection.

Meanwhile a change was also noticeable in the life of Naples. Common danger from *fraternité* and *égalité* had restored peace between the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Holy See. The power of the clergy, firmly curtailed during the years of Carolina's enthusiasm for philosophy, reform and beneficent government, was re-established. Priests thundered from pulpits indictments against the French Assembly and whispered warnings in confession-boxes; friars mingled with the people and subtly directed opinion. More and more *émigrés* sought refuge in Naples, bringing fresh stories of murder and pillage. By intriguing to bring about military intervention in France, the refugees had outworn their welcome in many countries. The Emperor Leopold, anxious to avoid a war that might endanger his sister or her husband, peremptorily dismissed the Count d'Artois, then visiting Vienna in the interests of the counter-revolutionary party. Carolina, believing that force alone could liberate her sister, was loath to adopt a policy liable to alienate the *émigrés* assembled in arms on the frontiers of France. Her desire for active intervention was shared by Gustavus III of Sweden, recent victor in an unequal struggle with

Russia, who advocated a league of princes and a powerful combined army to oppose the Jacobins.

"One has done too much," Carolina lamented; "for years we have tried to alleviate hardships, to foster learning and to encourage reform. Has it done good?"

"*Non ch' io sappia!*" Ferdinando replied. "My system of ruling is 'feasts, gallows and flour', and in spite of your Austrian passion for reform I am the only King able to walk safely among the people."

The Queen took no notice. "We have aided philosophers and men of vision. Cirillo, Pagano, Filangieri, all owe much to us."

"Not to me; only trouble comes from allowing reformers to write theses on government. My way is: *fešta, forza e farina*, Madame!" To emphasize his statement, the King thumped his large, chilblained hand upon the table, thereby spilling a glass of julep and Peruvian bark at his wife's elbow.

Sir William and Emma, spending an informal evening at the palace, were embarrassed witnesses of the royal bickering.

"Whatever difficulties other sovereigns are encountering, you, Sire, may congratulate yourself on contentment within this realm," the British Minister suavely observed.

"Ay," the King agreed, "so long as my people have full bellies they won't trouble what happens in other countries. We must give away more food this Carnival."

"And prevent dangerous doctrines spreading from France," added his Consort, with a long shudder. Queen Carolina was suffering from one of her periodic fits of tertiana, a disease bred in the rank marshes between the lakes of Lucrinus and Avernus and carried by easterly winds to Naples.

Sir William started to play on his viola an air from *L'Eroe Cinese*, a hint to Emma to restore harmony with her voice. Paisiello had set all Emma's songs for the *viol d'amore*, which enabled Sir William to act as accompanist.

Walking home through moonlit streets, the Envoy reverted to the clash between King and Queen. "Her Majesty is uneasy lest her past policy has created similar factions to those threatening the monarchy of France. The edict for the control of judges, the Marriage Act, and the Bill for limiting the authority of the barons were reforms which made her many powerful enemies."

Fate had in store new and unexpected blows for Maria Carolina. On the 1st of March the Emperor Leopold of Austria died after a

brief illness; sixteen days later Gustavus III of Sweden was shot in the back by Count Anckarström, and expired on the 29th of the month. According to the Neapolitan Prime Minister these calamities were of supreme consequence to Europe.

In the previous year General John Acton had succeeded, on the death of his second cousin Sir Richard Acton of Aldenham Hall, to an English baronetcy and a Shropshire estate. This event had increased the Prime Minister's prestige and his Anglomania.

Dining at Palazzo Sessa he expressed himself freely: "We must look to England to stem this wicked tide of anarchy threatening to engulf in ruin all Europe. There are no crowned heads on the Continent left with any bowels; most are ruled by mistresses or favourites. Frederick William of Prussia is obedient in all things to the Countess Lichtenau; Carlos IV of Spain is directed by his Queen's lover, Godoy; Catherine of Russia, though old enough to have found tranquillity, allows Platon Zubov to persuade her into foolish courses. Happily, in England we see respectability enthroned and a King guided by Westminster and not from the alcove."

"Are ye not unduly apprehensive, Sir John, in anticipating infection from the disorders of France?" inquired the British Minister. "The Neapolitans, relieved from the burdens of taxation and secured from want in time of scarcity by the royal bounty, have no economic grievances equivalent to those causing the revolution."

"That is true of the *lazzaroni*, but not of the nobility, the lawyers and landowners, whose interests have suffered from necessary readjustments. Among the *litterati* there are many malcontents too ready to incline eager ears to seductive whispers of *égalité*."

Meanwhile Ferdinando and his subjects thought only of carnival and the *Cocagna*. On the Sunday preceding Lent the King gave his people free entertainment on a grand scale. In Largo del Palazzo Reale an immense castle was erected, built according to the rules of fortification, and completely covered with pieces of beef, bacon, ham, venison, sucking pigs, geese, turkeys, chickens and wild fowl. The birds were alive and nailed up by their wings; their struggles to free themselves made the castle a moving spectacle in more ways than one. Two fountains running with wine were erected on either side of the castle; at the corner stood triumphal cars, the first loaded with bread, the second with flesh, the third with vegetables, and the fourth with fish; the provisions were piled high and crowned with musicians playing merry airs. *Liparotti*, in their red-and-green uniforms, guarded the

square until the King fired a pistol from the palace balcony, the signal for assault. Immediately the yelling rabble poured from all quarters. Agile, half-naked *lazzaroni* climbed like spiders up the wooden ramparts; birds were torn down at the expense of their wings; feathers floated and blood dripped.

While Ferdinando joked in dialect and feasted his favourite subjects, masks in fancy dress thronged the streets, pelting one another with confetti. Sir William, disguised as a scarlet devil, sent the crowds scuttling by skimming among them on wheels attached to his pointed shoes.

On the last night of Carnival, Emma, masked and dressed as Parthenope, sang a duet with the tenor Cosacilli at San Carlo. The mirrored walls multiplied the richly dressed masqueraders in the boxes and reflected naked arms and legs of the *lazzaroni*, who fought for places beneath the Royal *palchetto*, whence the richest stream of *maccheroni alla napoletana* descended from the King's liberal hands. On this occasion the poorest had free admission to the pit and the chance of being scalded by their own beneficent "*Nasone*". Looking down upon wild faces and eyes a-glitter in the light of a thousand candles, Emma was reminded of the mob illumined by the flames from the 'Swan' distillery on the great night of the Gordon Riots. For a moment she was no longer Lady Hamilton, but a bedraggled, reckless girl swinging nonchalantly from a lamp-post. Fleetinglly she recaptured a vagabond's exultation in freedom; the mood passed, and left her the sadder for recalling a self that had fled. . . .

The duet, written especially for Carnival, had little merit, but Emma sang her part superbly. Applause from the boxes was drowned by clamour from the pit. Savage faces framed in lank black hair looked up, brown arms were raised in rough salute. "*Bellissima, la Signora Ambasciatrice!*"

"A fig for your disguise, Emma!" whispered Prince Augustus.

On Holy Thursday, Carnival was borne on a bier to the sound of muffled drums, with death going before and Lent following behind in a dress clinking with shells of *frutti di mare*. Tiny lambs appeared tethered to street doors, where they fattened in grass and garbage for the massacre on Eastern morn. English visitors packed up to spend Holy Week in Rome, among them Prince Augustus, who acknowledged his indebtedness to Mrs. Cadogan by a gold snuff box and a hearty embrace. The Neapolitans had their city to themselves save for the *émigrés* rattling old-fashioned swords in rusty scabbards or

marching arrogantly in the counter-revolutionary uniform of dark blue without facings, yellow buttons, chain metal epaulettes, white cockades and feathered hats. The uniforms were supplied by the Bourbon Princes with thirty French sous a day to those who were necessitous.

A letter from Sir Robert Murray Keith, British Ambassador at Vienna, informing Sir William that on April 20th France had declared war on Austria, arrived before the courier dispatched to King Ferdinando. Going to the palace to confer with their Majesties, the Envoy found them unprepared.

"'Tis impossible to describe the Queen's fury that her son-in-law has allowed himself to be forestalled," Sir William told Emma. "This coupled with the fact that her daughter has just suffered a miscarriage, causes Maria Carolina to rate the young Emperor's capacities very low."

"Why are the French making war on Austria? One would think they had enough on their hands."

"The reasons can only be guessed. 'Tis supposed that Dumouriez, the Minister of Foreign Affairs who succeeds Narbonne, wishes for a war which will restore some power to the Crown and enable him to be the arbiter of France. Austria, with her domains widely scattered in Germany, Italy and in the Low Countries, is most vulnerable to sudden attack, especially now the Emperor is young and inexperienced."

Sir William proved right. The French attempted to invade the Netherlands at three points simultaneously: at Tournay, Mons and Namur. Immediately the wretched state of the forces was revealed. The cavalry fled in panic at Tournay, and completed their ignominy by barbarously murdering their distinguished leader, General Theobald Dillon.

News of the rout, trickling through to Naples, greatly heartened Queen Carolina, who envisaged a triumphant march upon Paris and the release of the royal family. She hastened to congratulate the Emperor Francis, and set about strengthening her own forces. The keels of two new warships were laid down in the naval yard at Castel-à-Mare; Sir John Acton increased the infantry by enrolling debtors and minor culprits from the Vicaria; negotiations were entered into with Colonel Edouard Dillon, who, having quitted France, was at Coblenz, reforming the family regiment. In further preparation, the Queen, using the King's name, invited Sardinia and Venice to join the Two Sicilies in a confederation supported by the Pope, to

preserve Italy from French invasion. She added pertinently: "The hope of escaping singly has ever been the ruin of Italy."

The Emperor of Austria was also endeavouring to secure allies; and in June succeeded in forming a union with Prussia and Holland. While revolutionaries and monarchs played bagatelle with the peace of Europe, the Neapolitans basked in the sunshine, danced the *tarentella*, and staked their money on lucky numbers. Vesuvius crouched peacefully against the turquoise sky, only an occasional flash of flame illumined a light canopy of smoke. Gardens along the Chiaia were a blaze of colour. In Villa Reale roses and jasmine trailed over the sea wall, magnolias bloomed amid polished green of ilex, daturas mingled with feathery pepper trees.

Emma and Sir William dined early at Posilipo, and spent the afternoons in the long-boat skimming over the glassy water to the airs of Cimarosa and Paisiello played by their band of musicians. Sometimes they were joined by the royal barge or encountered the King, stripped to the waist, harpooning swordfish with skill and dexterity. He never failed to bow with great deference to Emma; if near enough he seized her hand and conveyed it to his thick, moist lips.

"Were I compelled to be a King, I would choose Naples for my kingdom," Sir William remarked. "Here a crown has fewer thorns than in any other country. Ferdinando's very want of political power ensures his repose; at the extremity of Italy he is removed out of the way of contest and hostility. He has a splendid capital, palaces, woods, game—in short, everything that can induce to human enjoyment is assembled in this enchanting bay."

"Indeed I cannot imagine that heaven is better," Emma agreed.

Gliding over the shallow water near Capo di Posilipo, she could look over the side of the boat and see jelly-fish like transparent jewels; small octopus, swimming with graceful tentacles; starfish and gardens of brilliant sea-anemones. The rocky promontory cast a blurred pattern of itself upon the water, shuddering streaks of vivid colour and gloomy shadows of caves.

"Raise your head, Em, and ye'll see a match to your eyes."

Lupins, common fodder for horses, covered the rocky cliffs with a cap of blue; the flowers climbed up among the stone pines and the vines that were looped from tree to tree. A peasant, swinging on a rope of twisted willows, sang as he pruned the vines on the brink of a precipice.

"Virgil said: 'The lopper shall sing to the winds under the lofty

rock—*Hinc altâ sub rupe canet frondator ad auras*’,” Sir William quoted.

“Maybe Virgil wrote that on just such a day as this, looking up at Posilipo as we are doing.”

“’Tis very likely. Man appears and disappears, but the earth and the rocks endure.”

Emma and Sir William remained on the water until the sun sank below the horizon and the green ray flashed up into the sky. Approaching Naples in the gathering dusk, they saw red eyes of votive-lamps on Fra Rocco’s shrines, and golden plumes of torches flashing like fire-flies up the steep slopes of Pizzofalcone.

The months of August and September were blessed with many festivals, beginning with the octave of *Corpus Domini* and working up to a grand climax, the liquefaction of San Gennaro’s blood, a miracle which occurred in the cathedral on the 19th of every September. The royal family and the Court were expected to honour the principal saints, but after the *festa* of San Rocco the King appeared alone. Rumour, swifter than diplomatic couriers, reported the storming of the Tuileries, the massacre of the Swiss guards and the imprisonment in the Temple of the French royal family. Hardly had Queen Carolina assimilated these horrid events when others still more dreadful followed in rapid succession. On the 3rd of September the revolutionists assailed the Abbaye and La Force, putting to death the Royalist prisoners, among them the Princess de Lamballe, whose head, impaled on a pike, was held up to the window of Marie Antoinette’s apartment. September the 20th was another black day: the Prussians, commanded by the Duke of Brunswick, were defeated at Valmy by the French republicans.

Calling to pay a visit of sympathy, Emma found the Queen in the dark salon, a small room dependent for light on a stained-glass window. In a corner was a *prie-dieu* and a shrine, whereon a single candle burned, illuminating a livid effigy of Christ upon an ebony cross. Prolonged anxiety, ague and an ulcerated breast smarting from incisions of Dr. Cirillo’s lancet, had combined to bring about a fit of devotion. As a penance Her Majesty wore the heel of her shoe under her toes, her stays were stuffed with little strips of silk and coloured paper printed with appeals to the Madonna; as a further claim to merit the Queen rolled into pills squares of rice-paper, embellished with holy pictures, and swallowed them with water and pious ejaculations.

"Blessed Mary, ever virgin. . . . Blessed Michael the archangel. . . . Blessed John the Baptist. . . . The Holy Apostles. . . . St. Peter and St. Paul. . . . And all the Saints. . . ."

Emma waited in the shadows until, the rite concluded, Queen Carolina sank upon a chair.

Languidly she extended her hand. "My dear Miledi, you find me oppressed in every way. My health and feeble frame are unsuited to meet the dangers that loom on all sides. You have heard the latest acts of the infamous French?"

"Yes indeed, and 'tis hard to believe that even Jacobins could be such monsters. We met the Princesse de Lamballe when we was in Paris, and she quite charmed me by her gentle manners and affability. I don't wonder the Queen of France singled her out."

"A brave and noble woman—the Princess chose to die rather than take an oath against the monarchy. I fear her fate is the forerunner of many other atrocities. God knows where it will all end, for a revolution so bloodthirsty must involve every country."

"But not this one, Madame: in Naples all are loyal and loving subjects."

"Alas, not all. There are reasons for supposing the cursed doctrine of *égalité* has infected some of our younger men. They have been seen wearing the Jacobin red cap—a danger signal that cannot be ignored."

September ended as badly as it began. Royalty was abolished by the National Convention and the French Republic was established. Sardinia was successfully invaded and Savoy and Nice were occupied by the revolutionary forces. Repercussions were manifest in Naples: young men of leisure discarded powder in favour of cropped heads, side whiskers and beards "*à la Revolution*". *Beaux* appeared in striped jackets, large cravats, frilled shirts and breeches bagging out at the upper part but contracting tightly at the thighs and buttoning down the calves of the legs to meet boots of soft leather. By adopting the vogue of Paris the wearers branded themselves as sympathizers with the revolutionary cause; they were suspect at Court and anathema to the *lazzaroni*. The King, the Queen and Sir John Acton took steps to suppress the French fever before it got out of control. Drastic changes were made in administration. The Cavaliere Luigi di Medici, a young nobleman of ambition and resolve, was made Chief Commissioner of Police under the old title of Regent of the Vicaria, an appointment that placed him in charge of the twelve

wards of the capital, the metropolitan spies and a new department of aristocratic "informers". A start was made upon the criminal classes. The rookeries off Santa Lucia, the caves on Monte Calvario and the *fondachi* of Albano Puerto were relieved of their dangerous population, who were transferred to the Lipari and Trémiti islands. Mysterious disappearances became common in higher grades of society, people grew cautious in conversation and a feeling of tension prevailed. November brought defeat to the Austrians at the Battle of Jemmapes, the annexation of Savoy and Nice to France and the appointment of Citizen Mackau as Minister of the Republic at the Court of Naples in place of Le Duc de Fleury. The King declined to receive the Citizen and retired to his hunting-lodge near Caserta, leaving his Consort and Sir John Acton to cope with the difficult situation. Colonel Edouard Dillon and the British Minister were among those invited to the *chasse*.

Sir William made his preparations without enthusiasm. "I know the discomforts of San Leucio: all the floors are stone and as cold as charity, and every room smokes confoundedly except the King's. I feel too out of order to look forward to the campaign with pleasure." Moving to a mirror, he pulled down his lower lids and examined his eyes. "Yellow as a guinea," he reported disgustedly.

"You've not looked well this great while, Sir Will'um, and I wish you would not go, for if you become ill in a place so rough, there's no saying how it might end."

"At this juncture, my dear, I must sacrifice myself on the altar of diplomacy. In these dangerous days 'tis necessary to keep royal friendships warm, for they may prove valuable to Great Britain."

"Then I'll go myself to Caserta, and have the house ready in case you want to come home in a hurry."

"I confess 'twill be comforting to feel that I am not separated by sixteen miles from my bed."

With foreboding Emma watched him go.

Sir William followed the King and rode alone save for Gaetano Spedillo, a young, fair-haired Milanese who had become the Minister's valet when Vincenzo was pensioned in the spring. As they clattered across the courtyard, one of the hunting mastiffs paused, raised its head, and gave a long, eerie howl. Sir William looked round; as the dog ran past he gave it a flick with his whip before waving cheerfully.

Emma and Mrs. Cadogan took enough servants from Naples to get the country house ready in half a day. After the work was done,

Emma had leisure to brood on her fears. The weather was inclement, rain fell in sad persistence from a colourless sky, or else a north-easterly wind, blowing a hurricane, screamed like a banshee round the house. One night Mrs. Cadogan's window and the shutters blew in, carrying with them a piece of the bed-post. Emma feared for Sir William, situated in a far more exposed position. Notes, delivered by Gaetano, were persistently cheerful, but he complained that he was still much out of order and lived chiefly on bread and butter, being unable to digest meat breakfasts and suppers.

"If His Majesty protracts this *chasse* beyond the fortnight I fear I may be obliged to give up. I grow weak for lack of proper food and biliousness, which is causing me much discomfort."

In the absence of the Court, Caserta offered few distractions for an anxious mind. The palace gates were closed, every villa was shuttered, nothing disturbed the silence save the sound of water splashing over the cascades and distant reports of shots fired in the wood of Matalone. Emma and Mrs. Cadogan depended for society upon John Graeffe and his wife. The landscape-gardener occupied apartments in the old castle, a baronial fortress purchased by King Carlo for the reception of his Court while Vanvitelli's palace was under construction.

"But the very qualities that make a fortress admirable for defence are drawbacks to a home," lamented Carry Græffer. "This is no place for a female in delicate health, I declare it isn't, what with the twisty stone stairs, narrow windows and the ghost of Count Gaetano, whose face is putrid with the plague."

"Come, my love," her husband consoled; "ye shouldn't listen to servants' tales—ye've never seen the ghost."

"What if I haven't? I might—a woman with child may see anything! I wish I was safe back in Watergate Street, I do!"

Small and vivacious, Carry succeeded in looking pretty without valid reason. Her nose was large and beak-like, she had prominent cheek-bones, a high colour, bright brown eyes and a quantity of crinkled, wiry hair. Before quitting her native land, Carry Dods-worth lived with her Mamma in Chester, as it transpired in the very next house to Mary Cadogan's old companion, Mrs. Burt. The connexion, when discovered, disposed Emma and her mother to accept Carry Græffer as a life-long friend.

"However you look at it," Mrs. Cadogan sagely observed, "the world is a very small place."

Carry's labour pains coincided with Sir William's sudden homecoming. Emma was recalled from the ancient fortress, and, with panic at her heart, followed a footman's bobbing lantern through dark groves of ilex. She found Sir William, gaunt, yellow and prostrate with sickness, in the arms of a tall land officer dressed in a resplendent uniform. Gaetano had unpacked his master's valise and was temptingly upholding a night-shirt; a candle, burning on the floor beside the commode, cast a flickering shadow of the group against a white wall—a pantomime in grotesque, making Sir William's aquiline nose look like Pulcinella's.

Somehow they got him to bed. Spent, but determinedly suave, he thanked Colonel Dillon. "My dear fellow, I never expected to put ye to such vastly unpleasant employment on my account. Though I am sixty-two, this is my first taste of serious illness, yet I made pretty free with my constitution in my younger days."

Emma scribbled a frantic appeal to the Cavaliere Gatti, the only physician available, and dispatched it by Colonel Dillon, who intended to sleep at the palace. Two hours elapsed. Sir William's sickness and pain increased and his temperature rose. Emma was desperate, and sent the coach to fetch Dr. Nudi from Naples. At midnight the Cavaliere arrived, dishevelled and wigless. He smelt of wine, his eyes were moistly wayward, and he greeted Emma as if they were keeping an assignation. She knew the signs only too well, and her heart sank.

"Sir Will'um is like to die," she said on a sharp, admonishing note.

"Jesu Maria! Why do ye say that? Likely he's caught a chill and only needs a blooding to put him to rights."

Although he was so ill, Sir William managed a gallant greeting and tried to roll up his sleeve. He did not flinch when the lancet pricked; dutifully he made a fist over a ball of knitting-wool—even so the blood scarcely flowed.

Emma's heart was heavy and full of dread. A multitude of memories fitted through her mind, of actions all kind and tender. . . . She had been too happy, taken all for granted. . . . Never was there such a husband, friend and protector. . . . But she recognized it too late. . . . Oh, God, don't take him away! . . . Don't take him away! . . .

"I'm always puzzled," Sir William whispered, "why loss of blood should cure all ills."

The Cavaliere was hearty and convivial. "When a man is sick, it is a dispute between the patient and the disease. A physician is called in, and he comes with a great stick in his hand, to decide the quarrel. If it falls upon the disease, he cures the patient; if upon the patient, it kills him."

The contest, pithily described by the late Emperor's physician, continued for many days. Sometimes the doctor's silver-headed stick seemed to triumph, sometimes Sir William gained ground. The Cavaliere Gatti relinquished the case to Dr. Nudi, whose skill was reinforced by Dr. di Falco, sent by royal command. Morning and evening the King and Queen dispatched flattering messages of inquiry, hobby grooms were constantly arriving from Naples; Lady Dunmore and Lady Webster volunteered to stay with Emma during her anxiety.

Mrs. Cadogan was delighted. "It shows how well you're thought of, bach."

"'Tis all nothing to me. What consolation is it if I am losing him for ever? I was too sure, and imagined I was never more to be unhappy—I'll not easily fall into that error again."

At the end of eight days Sir William was out of danger. Throughout, Emma had not undressed; she lacked sleep and had eaten little. As a change Mrs. Cadogan suggested a visit to Carry Graeffe and her infant daughter.

The young mother greeted Emma with north-country candour: "My word, you look bad!"

Emma began to cry. "I can't tell you what I have suffered; indeed, I was almost distracted. What should I have done had I lost such a husband and friend? For surely no happiness is like ours. We live but for one another." She mopped her eyes while Carry looked enviously on beauty untouched by grief. "Excuse me—now all is right again I feel almost as ill as Sir Will'um, through apprehension and fatigue."

A glass of brandy shrub restored Emma sufficiently to admire the baby, also a gold watch set in pearls, twelve silver candle-sticks, a silver tea-board, coffee-pot, sugar-basin and cream-jug—all gifts from the King. "His Majesty has promised to be her godfather, too," said Carry in a far-away voice.

During Sir William's convalescence the British Consul was in charge at the legation; Emma had nothing to worry about, save lack of money—a chronic condition at the end of each quarter. Expenses had increased with an improved position, but Lady Hamilton's al-

lowance was no larger than Mrs. Hart's. Sir William's illness prevented the customary borrowing on account, and Christmas with its obligations was at hand. After several days' consideration, Emma pocketed her pride and wrote to Greville.

"You must know, I send my grandmother every Christmas twenty pounds, and so I ought. I have 2 hundred a-year for nonsense, and it would be hard I could not give her twenty pounds, when she has so often given me her last shilling. As Sir William is ill I cannot ask him for the order; but if you will get me the twenty pounds and send it to her, you will do me the greatest favor; for if the time passes without hearing from me, she may imagine I have forgot her, and I would not keep her poor old heart in suspense for the world, and as she has heard of my circumstances (I don't know how), but she is prudent, and therefore pray lose no time, and Sir Wm. shall send you the order. You know her direction—Mrs. Kidd, Hawerden, Flintshire. . . . Tell her every year she shall have twenty pound. The fourth of November last, I had a dress on that cost twenty-five pounds, as it was Gala at Court; and believe me I felt unhappy all the while I had it on. Excuse the trouble I give you. . . ."

Momentous events took place in the capital when Sir William lay ill at Caserta. Admiral La Touche Tréville and fourteen men-of-war sailed out of the blue horizon and anchored in line of battle across the port with the flagship half a gun-shot off Castel dell' Uovo. The Admiral demanded apology and reparation from the King of the Sicilies for insulting the French Republic by his refusal to receive Citizen Mackau as Envoy. Further reparation was required for inciting the Ottoman Court to adopt a similar attitude to Citizen Semonville.

While the guns of the fleet were trained upon Naples a Council of State was summoned: an empty ceremony in face of *force majeure*. The King agreed to receive Mackau and to recall his own Minister who had influenced the Porte against Semonville. Having obtained so much, Admiral Tréville demanded more: a promise to remain neutral in the wars of Europe and an agreement to send an ambassador to Paris. Again the Council of State conferred, again they agreed. Another note was drafted and accepted, this time the fleet weighed anchor and Carolina had the satisfaction of seeing them sail into a squall that obscured the horizon. That night the wind rose; waves

lashed the walls of Castel dell' Uovo; lightning rent the sky; thunder rumbled and crashed. Queen Carolina rejoiced, hearing in the shrieks of the tempest cries of drowning enemies. Heaven was just and retribution swift. . . .

Once more Providence punished, not the evil-doer, but the righteous. The wind, that should have sent the French squadron to the bottom of the sea, brought the ships back, dismasted, battered or with tattered sails. Admiral Tréville returned humbly, a friendly Power seeking assistance from a noble ally. Policy, compelling as the guns lately trained upon the city, obliged Sir John Acton to meet every demand. The resources of the dockyard were placed at the Admiral's disposal, but he did not hasten to use them. Instead his damaged ships lay at anchor off the *molo*, mocking the Queen with blue white and red striped flags of the republic, while *matelots*, wearing red caps of liberty, disported themselves in the booths and brothels around Porta Capuana. The officers found friends among the *émigrés*—the students and philosophers, the young noblemen who surreptitiously styled themselves "Neapolitan Jacobins". Policy obliged Maria Carolina to entertain Admiral Tréville and his Captains; she had to hear republican principles and institutions eulogized in her own palace: a trial that brought on a fit of hysterics in the privacy of her apartments.

After a seeming eternity to the royal hosts, Admiral La Touche Tréville announced that his squadron was ready for sea. Before saying adieu he gave a supper on board the flagship to the Neapolitan Jacobins, who were welcomed as friends and brothers. They wore little red caps pinned to their breasts, and as evening wore on and wine flowed, French and Italians embraced in the names of *égalité* and *fraternité* and drank to a speedy reunion in "*La République des Deux Siciles*".

Once more Queen Carolina watched the French ships sail from Naples, but this time they did not come back.

One morning the populace woke up to find the walls of their houses stuck with notices:

"The National Convention of France declares, in the name of the Nation, that it will grant fraternity and assistance to all people who wish to recover their liberty; and it charges the executive power to send the necessary orders to the generals to give succour to such people."

This pronouncement, glued to the façade of Palazzo Reale, was torn down by the King's own hands when he left the palace at day-break to catch gulls on Lake Piccolo.

The bay looked empty without the warships. Victuallers pocketed their gains and lamented the departed; the pimps of Porta Capuana, regretting the jolly *matelots* who had given so much custom, prudently cast off all girls with French pox; only the Neapolitan Jacobins looked forward and drank to the happy day of revolution.

Admiral Tréville's visit apparently left no impression on the royal family or on the Chief Minister. The King moved confidently as ever among the meanest of his subjects, the Queen drove through the streets unguarded save by the staves of eight running footmen. At his usual hour Sir John Acton walked down to the dockyard; twice weekly he drove to the plain of Sessa to watch troops in training; he kept in touch with the seven *Caisses de Crédit*, with diplomats and foreign bankers. Visitors to the palace came and went as usual. The Regent of the Vicaria made his calls after dark, the watchful *lazzaroni* were not surprised—the Cavaliere Luigi de Medici was a handsome young man and "the Austrian" no better than a *puttana*.

No evidence connected Palazzo Reale with the mysterious arrests of young men who had fraternized with the French officers and toasted the revolution in the flagship of Admiral La Touche Tréville.



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE secret police presented Carolina with an alarming report of disaffection. Like a widespread rot the tenets of France were undermining the structure of monarchy. Men and women in the Court circle were suspected of intriguing against the Crown. Professors at the universities as well as students were reported to be members of a Jacobin Club founded on the pattern of the Parisian prototype. Prompt measures were taken and further arrests made. The garrison was changed at Sant' Elmo, where the more important prisoners were lodged in underground cells cut in the rock under the fortress. One of the Queen's agents, Luigi Custode, obtained possession of documents belonging to Citizen Mackau when the Minister was in Rome, a theft that proved in no way worth the turmoil it occasioned. The police disclosures implicated a limited section of the population, but to the Queen's inflamed mind the findings rendered all suspect. In her doubts and fears she turned to Emma as the only woman she could trust.

An account of the trial and death of Louis XVI reached Naples eighteen days after the event. The same messenger brought a letter to Sir William written by Lord Malmesbury from his house in Spring Gardens:

"Parliament certainly will meet for the despatch of business on Monday the 28th. *Entre nous*, war is a measure decided on, but don't *proclame* it in Naples before you are informed officially . . ."

"'Twill not be long before Britain is involved; this will afford some comfort to the Queen of Naples, who is always asking why England does not come forward to protect her friends from a nation that has become a danger to mankind." Sir William refolded Lord Malmes-

bury's letter and locked it in his deed-box. "You will do well, Em, to write a note to Her Majesty which I can deliver when I make my condolences."

The news that King Louis was beheaded spread rapidly through the city; workmen appeared with black cloths, which they draped over the statues, the churches were hung with mourning and the air reverberated to tolling bells. Palazzo Sessa was besieged with callers demanding intelligence and advice; did Sir William think war imminent between England and France? If it was declared, how could travellers get home? Would any ships be sent to the Mediterranean?

The Earl and Countess of Cholmondeley left with the Minister to call at the palace; Lady Forbes, Lady Palmerston and Miss Carter remained to drink tea with Emma and Mrs. Cadogan.

"In the event of war Sir William's position here will be very important," Lady Palmerston observed. "I hear the Queen only waits for England to declare before repudiating the treaty of neutrality forced upon the King by the guns of La Touche."

"What an opportunity for you!" Lady Forbes sighed, and looked enviously at Emma. "I've always wished for power—not direct government, but the chance to pull strings, and make others act according to my ideas, like the man who manipulates the wires in a puppet show—the unseen autocrat who makes the figures dance. I foresee, Lady Hamilton, that you will be given this opportunity, that you, the Ambassador's wife, will cause vital happenings; your name will be engraved on history."

"Goodness, Selina, have you got one of your fits of 'seeing'?" demanded Lady Palmerston. Turning to Mrs. Cadogan, she added: "Lady Forbes is Irish, and has the disquieting faculty of seeing ghosts."

"The Earls of Moira and their children have always had the sight," Lady Forbes quietly answered.

Though gratified to be the subject of prophecy, Emma modestly disclaimed political ambitions. "'Tis glory I want—not power. Often and often I've pictured myself saving England by my courage in a sea battle."

The three ladies looked at her dubiously. "You'll never be able to do that," they said in chorus.

Two days elapsed before Queen Carolina acknowledged Emma's sympathy with an engraving of the Dauphin and a short note in French:

"My dear Miledi,

I have been greatly touched by the interest you take in respect to the execrable catastrophe with which the French are stained. I send you the portrait of this innocent infant, who implores vengeance, succour, or, if he is also sacrificed, his ashes united to those of his parents, cry out before the Eternal for a striking vengeance. I rely the most on your generous nation to fulfil this object. Pardon the feelings of a distracted heart. Your attached friend, *Charlotte*."

The Queen used either French or Italian for correspondence, and signed herself Charlotte or Carolina according to the language employed. Following Sir William's method, Emma endorsed the cover:

"To Lady Hamilton from the Queen of Naples the 9th of February 1793, 2 days after she had received the news of the horrid execution of the King of France her brother-in-law."

Had the Queen known, her wishes were already realized. On the 3rd of February the French National Convention declared war against England, Spain and Holland. Lacking this knowledge, Carolina pressed forward with feverish energy her preparations for war. Ferdinand's indifference angered her hardly less than if he had interfered. "You cannot understand how it taxes my poor strength to plan and think of everything," she complained to Emma. "The King leaves all to me, and goes off to his sport, saying that I make too much of the treachery discovered. I know that the majority in the capital consists of good and loyal people, but it is necessary to be vigilant and ruthless in stamping out the noxious herbs which are poisoning the others."

"Madame, I'm sure you imagine things to be worse than they are. I meet all sorts, and everyone speaks with disgust of the French devils, and even the poorest contrives some wisp of mourning for the murdered King."

"The *lazzaroni* I never doubt, but the *studenti* and the traitors of rank are capable of any pretence to disguise their guilt. You, Miledi, whose candour is so refreshing, cannot grasp the infamy surrounding us on every hand."

Emma was yet to feel identified with European affairs. As a spectator she was agreeably stimulated by accounts of wars and revolutions robbed by distance of reality. Reports of French excesses formed a dramatic background to daily life—a pinch of spice to common bread.

Such things were quickly forgotten in the more absorbing pursuits of music and languages. The opera was still of paramount interest, although the season had been poor owing to the lack of a front-rank *prima donna*. To the embarrassment of the *impresario*, Madame Banti's expulsion from Neapolitan territory had been effected straight from the stage by practised secret agents. The Banti was not the first temptation removed out of the King's way by Maria Carolina. She employed her usual formula: a post-coach and an armed guard to conduct the charmer into the Papal States.

"The Queen always waits to take action until His Majesty is at a distant hunting-lodge, and no amount of experience ever warns Ferdinando," Sir William chuckled. "If Mrs. Billington comes to San Carlo next season I fancy the Queen will regret that she didn't put up with Madame Banti. The late Duke of Rutland, a far greater connoisseur than 'Nasone', was Elizabeth Billington's slave, although he was married to one of the most beautiful and witty women in England."

"I'm glad the King didn't continue to fancy me."

"My dear, his amours are of less consequence to him than the *chasse*, and he knew he would lose his best shot if he poached on my preserves."

The news that Great Britain was at war with France acted as a tonic to Maria Carolina's flagging spirits. A dispatch from Lord Grenville to Sir William Hamilton requesting the Minister to effect an offensive and defensive alliance between Britain and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was accomplished immediately the Envoy proposed it.

"My prayers are answered," said the Queen; "may God bless and aid with His almighty power the brave and loyal English."

"There is that agreement of neutrality with the French Republic," the King demurred.

"Exacted by duress! "

"I do not think we need vex ourselves over that," Sir John Acton dryly observed. "The question is, what would be required of us? If we repudiate neutrality in favour of alliance with England we render ourselves liable to attack from the sea, which our navy is not strong enough to repulse. We can do nothing unless Britain sends a fleet to the Mediterranean."

"Then we will sign a secret treaty with Britain on that understanding," answered Carolina.

King Ferdinando meditatively rubbed his chin with a rasping

sound. "We can call on my brother—Naples has always relied for protection on Spain."

"I know that," Carolina replied with asperity, "but *then* the Sicilies had no navy!"

"And now we have, you and Sir John say it can't meet the enemy!"

"Not unsupported—our ships will do wonders acting with the British."

Sir William intervened. "Then I may inform Lord Grenville that the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies will enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with Great Britain on the understanding that the treaty is kept secret until a sufficient support is sent to these waters?"

"Yes; Sir John Acton will give those instructions to our Ambassador in London."

"Prince Castelcicala's appointment terminates next month," the Prime Minister reminded.

"Then write at once before Siciogniano relieves him."

The conference being over, Ferdinando took Sir William by the arm. "The huntsman at Cacciabella says he has counted more than a hundred young boars at suck that would be all the better for killing. . . ."

After signing the secret agreement with England, the King and Queen prudently quitted the capital for Caserta, there to wait until Lord Hood and his fleet entered the Mediterranean. Since Sir William's illness his country villa had been his headquarters, an arrangement which was continued at the request of the Queen. There were quiet evenings at the palace enlivened by duets sung by the King and Emma to Sir William's accompaniment on the viola. The royal vocalist sang in a shrill, tuneless falsetto, the counterpart of his speaking voice, which in moments of pleasure rose to a treble key. Twice or thrice a week the Hamiltons drove to town to give dinners and balls for the benefit of English visitors, sometimes the day ended with a supper for three hundred guests and a return drive of sixteen miles in the small hours of morning. In June the British Minister entertained at his villa a party of fifty for four days. Happily for his pocket, the guests dined at the palace—Her Majesty could not do enough for her unwitting allies. Seizing an opportunity, Sir William wrote to Greville:

"Between Caserta and Naples I pass my days agreeably. Emma goes on perfectly to my mind, but she has made our house so agreeable

that it is more frequented then ever, and, of course, I am at greater expense. However, I may safely say that no minister was ever more respected than I am here, and the English travellers, as Lord Cholmondeley will tell you, feel the benefit of our being so well at this Court, for Emma is now as well with the K. and Q. as I am."

On the 10th of July the Court returned to the capital in order that the King might inspect the *Guiscardo* and *Tancredi*, 74-gun ships under Marshal Fortiguerra and 2,000 troops, a contribution to the Anglo-Neapolitan armament under the secret pact with Britain. The treaty came into operation on the 20th, Citizen Mackau had eight days notice to quit the Kingdom, war was officially declared against the French Republic on the 3rd of September. Thanks to fervid eloquence of friars and priests, the alliance and the hostilities were acclaimed with patriotic loyalty by the *lazzaroni*. On returning to their capital the King and Queen were received with frenzied enthusiasm; a bon-fire was built in Largo del Palazzo Reale and a red cap of liberty ceremoniously consigned to the flames by a capering mob of half-naked barbarians. From thence the demonstrators surged over the crown of Pizzofalcone to applaud the British Minister. Shouting and yelling, they poured down Vico Santa Maria and into the courtyard. In a moment the wide space was packed. Savage faces framed in black elf-locks were lit by flaming flambeaux, teeth gleamed and eyes glittered. "*Eccellenza! Eccellenza!*" shouted a hundred voices.

With his hand on the window-hasp, Sir William called to Emma, who watched from another room. "Come, *Ambasciatrice*, we must show ourselves."

A yell greeted their appearance on the balcony. "*Viva vostra Eccellenza! Viva la Eccellenza! Viva il Re d'Inghilterra! Viva il Re Ferdinando! Giu la libertà!*"

Sir William saluted and voiced his thanks in the patois of Naples. Emma waved and smiled. They tried to withdraw, but the shouts increased. "*Viva il Re Inghilterra! Signora, cantate l'inno Britannico!*"

Laughingly, Emma shook her head. The mob surged forward, the savage faces were upraised in fierce expectancy, a hush fell.

"*Signora!*" pleaded a handsome young fisherman on a low, caresing note.

"Ye'll have to comply," whispered Sir William—"sing the second stanza."

Stepping to the balustrade, Emma raised her arm in Roman saluta

tion. In response a score of torches were held on high. "*Signora! Signora! Brava! Bravissima!*"

For a full minute she stood motionless, a lovely vision illumined by pulsing golden light. Then her voice rang on the air, clear, beautiful, triumphant:

*"O Lord our God, arise,
Scatter his enemies,
And make them fall!
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks;
On Thee our hopes we fix—
God save us all!"*

Her audience remained quiet; then an old man, speaking in English, cried: "God save the King, and God bless ye, my bonny lady!" In an orderly manner the crowd turned towards the gates and shuffled after each other. Glare from torches shining above the high wall revealed the courtyard, empty save for a few sleeping forms lying under the Judas trees.

Sir William was expecting Prince Augustus. In April the young man had married Lady Augusta Murray in Rome, an alliance that caused great displeasure at Windsor. Before he arrived, Sir William had orders from London to send the Prince home by the first opportunity; this intelligence he communicated to Lord Hood, who detached a frigate to convey the royal delinquent to England. Some embarrassment was caused both to Sir William and to the Honourable Robert Stopford, Captain of the *Aquilon*, when it was discovered that the unacknowledged Princess intended to make the voyage.

"Did you expect him to leave her behind?" Emma asked.

"But devil take it, My Lady, I had no orders to take a woman aboard, and a 32-gun ship is not the place for one, neither, especially a female so far gone in the family way." Captain Stopford's face was pink with annoyance and embarrassment.

"Well, my dear fellow," said Sir William, "there's no alternative."

The Prince and Princess were much in love; both felt greatly alarmed by foretokens from England. "And my husband is not the first member of our royal family to marry a commoner," Princess Augusta argued: "the Duchess of Cumberland was only Mrs. Horton, and a Luttrell at that, and the Duchess of Gloucester is nothing but Sir Edward Walpole's bastard. I at least am respectably born—the

Earls of Dunmore are as well thought of as any family in Scotland."

"If Your Royal Highness delves into the histories of our royal and noble families I fear ye will uncover some strange skeletons," Sir William answered. "I advise ye not to feel apprehensive. His Majesty could never resist the appeal of a pretty face."

The guests were taken to Caserta, to Pompeii, where the Princess fainted, and through the *boschetto* at Portici. In the evenings Emma again sang duets with a royal partner. Prince Augustus was provoked that he succeeded King Ferdinando. "'Faith, I shouldn't have thought His Majesty had any music in him. Was his performance good?'"

Emma, searching through a pile of music, responded absently: "It was but bad, as he sings like a King."

Sir William coughed warningly, but his fears were unfounded. Prince Augustus was soothed by Emma's candour. "Then I was right. Now, I have the most wonderful voice that ever was heard—three octaves—and I *do* understand music. I practised eight hours a day in Rome. One may boast of a voice as it is a gift of nature."

As the visit drew to a close it was marred by the indisposition of the Princess; only through Mrs. Cadogan's nursing was she able to embark at the time appointed by Captain Stopford.

Attendance on the royal guests had prevented Sir William keeping himself conversant with what he termed "parochial affairs". Application to Sir John Acton informed him that several more suspected Jacobins were arrested and a number of incriminating papers had been found on empty premises near the Gesu Vecchio. Turning to a wider sphere, they discussed the fall of the Girondists and speculated upon its effect on the course of the revolution. "I anticipate that Roland, Dumouriez and Company will soon have practical experience of the fate ruthlessly devised for others," said Sir William.

"Yes, the revolution got beyond control, as revolutions will, overthrowing those who set it in motion."

"None will lament anything that befalls the Girondists, unless their fate places the Queen of France in still further jeopardy."

"Much depends on events at Toulon," Sir John Acton replied; "the southern uprising against the Republicans may be the beginning of better things. It is believed that Provence wishes to become a separate Republic, and in La Vendée the Royalists claim to have cleared the territory."

"Tranquillity will be more speedily restored to France if unity animates the attacking Powers; so far the allies have dissipated

strength in selfishly attempting individual conquests," Sir William summed up as he rose to go.

After the dispatch of her naval and military forces, Naples relapsed into peaceful lethargy. September began in a colourful procession of *festas* and brilliant days. To Maria Carolina, racked by anxiety and impatient for vengeance, the lull was ill-omened and hard to endure. Emma spent much of her time at Palazzo Reale trying to allay the Queen's apprehensions.

"Never a word from any quarter! I live in constant anxiety for news, yet when it comes it will be bad and I shall wish myself back on the rack of uncertainty. Every night I dream that my sister is jolting in a tumbril to a violent death, I see the snarling mob straining forward like savage dogs thirsting for blood. Miledi! I see the knife grinding down, I hear the harsh severing of flesh and bone! Oh, God! I see the head fall. What can I do? What can I do?"

Taking the afflicted woman in her arms, Emma soothed her with words of hope.

"And Toulon, what of Toulon? Why do we not hear?"

Day after day the sun blazed from an azure sky, bleaching to white irradiance the picturesque city of turrets, domes, castles, palaces and prisons mounting from the sparkling bay to the lofty escarpments of Sant' Elmo. From Vesuvius a column of dense grey smoke rolled high into the clear air. The volcano had been in continuous eruption since February, throwing up stones and ashes to an accompaniment of hollow sighs and subterranean grumbling. Sir William made frequent excursions up the mountain and from Naples kept close observation through his telescope.

In the late afternoon of September the 11th he called Emma to look at a man-of-war just appearing behind Ischia. The ship was under full sail, but in an hour made little progress.

"She'll not make port this night," declared Sir William.

Emma tugged his sleeve, impatient for a turn at the telescope.

"Tis too far off to see the flag; but she's a first-rate, Sir Will'um?"

"Looks like a 64—I fancy she'll lie-to for the night."

Before dusk several members of the English colony came to look through the telescope. "Ah, just as the Ambassador surmised, Henrietta," said the Bishop of Winchester, surrendering the spy-glass to his wife: "a 64-gun ship, technically described as a third-rate."

"Indeed? A large boat—I hope it's English," answered Mrs. North.

"If she is French, we may be blown out of our beds to-morrow morning, ma'am," Emma remarked, with a quizzing glance.

The Bishop's lady eyed the upstart askance. "Do you mean that as a joke, Lady Hamilton?"

"As it pleases you to take it, Ma'am." No love was lost between Emma and Mrs. North. . . .

At midnight the ship lay in the centre of the bay, a silhouette against the golden track of the moon hanging like a brass disc over Capri.

Sir William had brought his telescope to the bedroom, and in the morning he got up and threw open the shutters. With the glass to his eye he reported to Emma: "A British ship—she's level with Torre del Greco, but makes no headway."

Scrambling from the mosquito curtains, Emma found her slippers and joined her husband. "My God, did you ever see anything so lovely?"

The sun, rising behind Vesuvius, cast a glow of mauve and pink upon the cone and the screes that ran down into the vineyards. The bay was tinted and faintly ribbed like fine Venetian glass—so calm was the water that fishing-boats converging upon Santa Lucia and Ponte dell' Immacolatella left no tracks upon the shining flood. No wind disturbed the smoke churning in great puffs from the volcano, no breeze filled the sails of the warship becalmed off Torre del Greco.

"Can you see, Em? They're lowering a boat."

"I suppose they think 'twill take a month of Sundays before the ship gets in."

"Look! There's an officer climbing down a rope ladder. My dear, he's so covered with gold lace he must be someone of rank. I'd better dress fast as I can and meet him on the *molo*."

Emma continued her watch, while Sir William made a hurried toilet in the adjoining room.

"Is the boat making for Porto Grande or the arsenal steps?"

"'Tis too far off to be certain, but I think the Porto."

"Damnation!" Emma heard him go into the corridor and shout an order for the phaeton. The arsenal could be reached quickly by *gradino Picchiatti*, but there was no short cut to the grand harbour.

"I'll bring the officer to breakfast," said Sir William as he came to give Emma a hurried kiss.

"Do, then we may learn something of the Neapolitan ships that will please the Queen."

Emma could not tear herself away from the window. Sir William waited impatiently for his carriage; tall and lean as a greyhound, he walked alertly backwards and forwards. He wore a suit of puce Verona cloth and a rakishly tilted, wide-brimmed hat which cast a shadow over his deep-set eyes and large, aquiline nose. Having dressed in a hurry, his hair lacked powder and his chin showed a blue sheen—shortcomings that in no way detracted from his distinguished appearance. Emma thrilled with pride; not one of the noblemen who came to Naples looked such an aristocrat as Sir Will'um. . . .

After the Minister had driven from the courtyard, Emma turned to look down the slope of Pizzofalcone to the bay. The boat from the warship was nearing the shore; through the telescope she clearly distinguished the officer in the stern. Small and slightly built, he appeared almost extinguished by an extra large cocked hat.

Breakfast was postponed until the sea officer arrived. After a lengthy absence Sir William returned alone. "We won't wait," he said. "Captain Nelson is coming later. I left him with Sir John Acton, who is to arrange an early audience for him with His Majesty."

"Does he bring dispatches?"

"Yes, and with amazing news. Toulon and twenty-two Sail of the Line have surrendered to Lord Hood without a shot fired."

"Were the French such cowards?"

"Toulon was starved into submission. The Republic neglected to victual the place, and Captain Nelson says our blockade was so effective that not a boat got through."

"Does Captain Nelson come to tell the King?"

"I think his main object is to obtain reinforcements to guard the extensive works surrounding Toulon; whether under Lord Hood's orders or on his own initiative I have not inquired."

"Sure he'd have to do as he was told," cried Emma, "seeing Lord Hood commands the whole fleet."

Sir William laughed. "Captain Nelson has more than his share of audacity, it is not unlikely that he might act first and ask permission afterwards."

"Have you met him before?"

"No, but I've heard of him. He was the officer on the Leeward Island station who, after the American war, created a stir by seizing American vessels trading with the West Indies."

"Hadn't he the right?"

"Afterwards it was proved that he had, but at the time our

Governors and Custom Officers contended that Americans, although they had become foreigners, had a right to trade under the Navigation Act."

"I thought Governors always acted in the interests of the King."

"On this occasion they considered only the planters and traders. Captain Nelson had writs taken out against him claiming damages for an enormous sum. To avoid arrest he had to remain on board his ship, but at the trial his action was upheld. Subsequently the Treasury thanked Sir Richard Hughes (who had not supported Nelson) for his zeal in protecting the commerce of Great Britain. All this I had first hand from the Duke of Clarence, who commanded the frigate *Pegasus* on the same station."

Sir William's account aroused Emma's curiosity, and she waited eagerly for Captain Nelson, who sounded interesting as he was audacious.

He arrived as they finished breakfast. Entering on the heels of the footman, he shook hands like an old friend with Emma and Mrs. Cadogan. Sir William pressed him to sit down. "Our good *Signora Madre* will be provoked if ye do not taste all the dishes she has ordered."

"Ma'am, you'll have no cause to complain over my lack of appetite, though you may frown at it being too large. Do you know, my poor fellows have not had a morsel of fresh meat or vegetables for near nineteen weeks? and in that time I've only had my foot twice on shore, at Cadiz."

"Oh, the poor things! We must see there's plenty sent on board for everyone—will you be giving orders, Sir Will'um."

"Presently. First I want to hear more of the astonishing events that have just taken place."

"Didn't the cowardly French fleet come out at all?" Emma demanded on an incredulous note.

"They did not, though we thought they would on August the 25th, when Admiral Trogoff was deposed and St. Julien was made head of a fleet of sixteen Sail of the Line. We were only twelve sail, Lord Hood having sent away part of his fleet to give them the option; but they did not come out and fight us—an issue we should have liked better than laying the ships up dismantled."

Captain Nelson had the frank eagerness of a boy, a manner that complemented his youthful and slight appearance. His eyes were sky blue and vigilant, his nose was long and wide at the bridge; a large,

sensitive mouth with a full under-lip was his most noticeable feature. He wore a full-laced uniform; his unpowdered straight hair was tied in a stiff Hessian tail of extraordinary length. White small-clothes, thread stockings, shoes with steel buckles and a very high black stock completed his clothing.

Sir William raised an eyebrow. "I assume, Captain Nelson, that you have not come to Naples for the sole purpose of delivering dispatches?"

"We need troops, Sir, to hold our gains; if His Majesty of Naples would supply a sufficient force he would greatly benefit by keeping twenty-two enemy ships laid up. As we entered Toulon Rear-Admiral St. Julien with four thousand men left to join General Carteaux and the Parisian Army; I think it probable that the united force is now attacking our positions."

"Has Lord Hood given you authority to ask for reinforcements?"

Captain Nelson pulled a comic face. "Not in writing, Sir, but the Lord's anxiety was conveyed to me by Captain Seymour Conway of the *Leviathan*, who left Toulon five days after I sailed for Oneglia with dispatches."

"Hugh Conway? He wrote me a letter to the same effect. I was glad he got a 74; where is Willett Payne?"

"With the Channel Fleet—commanding the *Russell*."

Observing Emma's blush, Mrs. Cadogan intervened. "Are you going to remain long in Naples, Captain Nelson? There's a deal to see if you have the time. On the 29th we have the liquefaction of San Gennaro's blood at the cathedral, and a very interesting sight it is."

"That's most remarkable, Ma'am: miracles don't usually occur by time-table."

Mrs. Cadogan's eyes twinkled. "San Gennaro is very regular, Sir!"

It was not Sir William's custom to proffer hospitality to officers visiting the port, and Emma was surprised to hear him pressing Captain Nelson "to occupy the apartments of Prince Augustus while your ship lies in the bay."

"Tis a temptation to exchange my dreary and comfortless cabin for this," said the sea officer, gazing in frank admiration at the handsome room. "I only hesitate on account of my young son-in-law. Josiah is a steady youngster, but my wife may not easily forgive me for leaving him."

"Bring him too, by all means."

"Josiah would like nothing better, I know, but it would not be good for discipline. If the ladies will show him kindness when he comes ashore, it will give both him and me great satisfaction."

Emma and Captain Nelson were left alone while Sir William attended to official business and Mrs. Cadogan gave orders for the guest's reception.

"My dear Sir," said Emma, "we've heard little of your sufferings during the long weeks you was at sea, yet they must have been severe, though you forget hardships in the glory of success."

"Alas! the fatigue of getting it has been so great that most of our ships are knocked up. Day after day, week after week, month after month, we have not been two gunshots from Toulon. No fleet, I am certain, ever served their country with greater zeal, from the Admiral to the lowest sailor."

"Your reward is honour and glory," she cried.

Arrested by the tone of her voice, Captain Nelson looked intently at Emma. "You understand?" he said in surprise.

"Indeed I do. Would you believe it? I often pretend that I am a man fighting for my country. You'd be astonished at the heroic acts I perform and the number of imaginary battles I win."

"Do you never lose?"

"Never!" she answered emphatically.

He looked at her with admiring respect. Leaning against opposite pillars of a stone arch, they faced Vesuvius and the eastern half of the bay, and from their elevated position overlooked the roof of the royal palace, the turrets of Castel Nuovo and Porto Grande, where a flotilla of small boats embarked fresh food for the *Agamemnon*.

Their conversation was interrupted by Sir William, who brought word that the King would visit the British ship in the course of the morning. Captain Nelson left hastily, promising to send his step-son ashore.

Josiah Nisbet arrived in time for dinner at noon. He had an assured, man-of-the-world manner and carried himself with a bold swagger. Emma drove him to Caserta to see the English garden and to drink tea with the Graeffers in the old castle. All the afternoon Emma was perplexed by something familiar about his face. At last she asked: "Did I ever see you before, Mr. Nisbet? I cannot understand it, but your face isn't strange."

"I'm glad of that, My Lady, and I hope in the future it will be

even better stamped on your mind. But unless you have been at Burnham Thorpe in Norfolk, I do not think you can have clapped eyes on your humble servant."

Executing a promise to his step-father, Emma drove Josiah from Porta Capuana directly to the quay by the Carmine, where she engaged a boatman to row him to the ship.

That evening the principal officers of the *Agamemnon* were entertained at Palazzo Sessa. Emma sang in Italian and English; her voice had reached perfection, and she astonished the British officers, who did not expect their Minister's lovely wife to be a *prima donna*. Always delighted to surprise, she called for her shawls, and, with Sir William as torch-bearer, gave successive representations of famous statues and paintings. The "Attitudes" always charmed. Captain Nelson was boisterous in applause. At intervals he ejaculated: "Mrs. Siddons be damned!" and "Well done, My Lady! Well done!" When the company adjourned to drink tea in the room of mirrors, Emma felt that she had given the best performance of her life.

The King called the officers and men of the *Agamemnon* the "Saviours of Italy", and despite an inveterate dislike for a pen and ink, laboriously wrote a personal letter to Lord Hood and gave orders that six thousand troops should be ready to embark for Toulon. Having done everything needful to further the Anglo-Neapolitan cause, Ferdinando paid personal tribute to Captain Nelson by taking him to the Palace of Portici to watch a corps of Liparotes and Cadets drilling in the large garden.

An expedition to Lago d'Agnano was planned for the following day, an excursion not greatly favoured by Emma, but, as Sir William pointed out, the *Stufe di San Germano* competed with Vesuvius as a spectacular phenomenon. After breakfasting at Villa Emma, the Minister's party set out in a coach and six. The wide marina that separated the white palaces of Chiaia from the sea deteriorated into an uneven, dusty road level with the shore. A straggling line of flat-roofed dwellings painted with gruesome representations of souls in purgatory made a fitting background for the savage-looking inhabitants. Men, dressed in scanty sackcloth aprons and red or brown night-caps, crouched in the dust, playing on their fingers the game of *morra*. Sullen, dirty girls with pock-marked faces ran beside the carriage, crying: "Charity! For the love of God, charity! I am dying of hunger!" a chorus augmented by the washerwomen, who, kneeling

in wheelless wooden barrows, pounded linen in the surf. Josiah, furnished with *grana* by Sir William and Captain Nelson, scattered largess with a liberal hand.

"My dear boy," said the Minister, reluctantly producing a fresh supply of coins, "if ye lived in this kingdom ye'd need to curb generosity."

"How many *grana* go to a *carlino*, Sir?"

"Ten *grana* make one *carlino*, ten *carlini* form one *ducat*."

"I learned this morning that a *carlino* equals fourpence half-penny, and that's nothing," cried Josiah, flinging down another shower of brass pieces.

Captain Nelson looked provoked. "I fear Josiah hasn't mastered the value of money; he inherits the princely tastes of his West Indian forbears."

"To which of the islands does Mrs. Nelson belong?" Sir William politely inquired.

"Nevis. Her father was a judge, and her uncle, Mr. Herbert, who died early this year, was President of the Island."

Emma now understood why Josiah's face appeared familiar. He resembled his mother, who, twelve years before, scornfully looked up at Emily Hart sitting in Captain Payne's fashionable phaeton. . . .

Sir William continued: "I hope Mr. Herbert left your wife a handsome provision?"

"Not so much as we expected. As President of Nevis he kept open house in lavish style and we think lived higher than his fortune. No one who . . ."

Captain Nelson's words were engulfed in the echoing darkness of the road through Monte Posilipo. The grotto pierced the promontory from east to west and was entered by an eighty-foot arch cut in the precipice below Virgil's tomb. Sir William, according to his custom, produced a tinder-box and lit a candle; the trembling flame revealed etiolated ferns growing in crannies of the dripping walls, bats hanging head downwards and holy frescoes disintegrated by damp. The clatter of carts and carriages over the lava pavement, the clamour of their drivers and the braying of asses bringing faggots from the woods reverberated through the grotto and subdued all but Josiah. On emerging into the sunshine he turned to Sir William. "Sir, your tunnel is very long."

"Exactly two thousand four hundred and fourteen feet, young man!"

"The King should build a road over the mountain: the tunnel is too dusty—I'm stifled."

"Then ye must complain to His Majesty, who has the road strewn with fresh sand every time he passes through."

The great heat of summer was past, the brilliant day had a languid quality of fulfilment. Grapes hung in purple clusters from the vines trained from tree to tree. The Bay of Baiæ was still and deeply blue, an azure haze lay over the land and dimmed the distant outlines of Capo Meseno and Procida, only the tiny island of Nisida stood out like a green jewel beyond the narrow channel of the Lazaretto.

By turning inland the gorgeous view was soon exchanged for one of desolation. Tall, melancholy-looking rushes grew in stagnant ditches; walls and houses were half ruined; men and women hoeing the ground under the vines were livid and shaking with ague. Apathetic and sullen, they turned to watch the Minister's coach lurching along the uneven road.

"I wouldn't care to come this way unarmed," said Captain Nelson.

"You'd be safer here than in some parts of Naples," Sir William answered. "These wretched peasants have all they can do to live, a malaria prevails everywhere, and even the wines of this part are considered highly prejudicial to the nervous system."

"My God!" cried Emma, "the very air breeds melancholy, and I feel fit to die of sorrow for days after I've been to this place."

"'Tis your heart that responds to the sufferings of others," Captain Nelson gravely observed, with his eyes on her lovely face.

"You are right, my dear Sir," the Minister cordially agreed. "Emma has no other fault than that of too much *sensibility*, and that at least is a fault on the right side."

At the Grotto del Cane the sea officer received further confirmation of Emma's soft heart. After visiting Lago d'Agnano, a lake of inky water filling the crater of an extinct volcano, Sir William piloted his guests to a small wooden door covering a cave in the bank. Overhung by bushes of wild myrtle and ilex, it resembled the entrance to a roadside well, save that yellowish vapour seeped under the door. Two cadaverous custodians stood by, one holding a key and the other a cord tied round the neck of a trembling mongrel dog. As the door was unlocked, Emma gripped her husband's arm. "Oh, Sir Will'um, don't make the experiment with the poor dog: use a candle instead."

"Nonsense, my dear; the dog is so accustomed to dying and being

restored to life that it has become indifferent, like the lady in Dryden's fables who is condemned to be hunted, killed, recovered and set on foot for the amusement of her tormentors."

Wearing awed expressions, the visitors watched the deadly vapour drift over the cavern's threshold. "Pliny describes the grotto among the *spiracula, et scrobes charoneæ, mortiferum spiritum exhalantes*," Sir William intoned, "Vapour exuding from the sides and floor is mixed with carbonic acid gas, which, from its greater specific gravity, accumulates at the bottom, thus the upper part of the cave is pure."

Emma's attention was fixed upon the dog, resisting with puny strength the torture he knew too well. His rolling eyes showed white as he pulled against the rope; his nails, digging into the soft earth, scraped deep grooves. Suddenly he was caught, forced over the step and down into the eddying gases.

When the door was shut, Sir William, watch in hand, leant nonchalantly against the bank; Josiah half crouched to peer through the key-hole; Emma, shrinking upon a boulder, rocked herself in anguish. Captain Nelson stood apart, gazing entranced upon a vision of Sensibility.

"Don Pedro de Toledo," said Sir William, without taking his eyes from the minute hand, "hearing that this chamber was used as a place of execution for Turkish captives, tried the experiment on two galley-slaves, with fatal effect."

The climax of the exhibition being reached, the door was opened, the custodian stepped inside, felt about in the vapour and pulled up the limp body of the brown mongrel. Dangled by its hind legs, the victim was exhibited to each visitor in turn. "*Mortibundo!*" said the man, piercing the dog's ear with a stiletto. Emma snatched the dagger and flung it into the lake.

"Now I shall have to give a *ducat* instead of three *carlini*," Sir William lamented. "Ye will observe, Captain Nelson, that my wife's tender heart causes me continual expense; I hope your *sposa* is not so impetuous?"

The sea officer's face was lit by a strange expression. He answered slowly, like a man viewing a familiar subject from a new aspect. "Mrs. Nelson never acts contrary to my expectations."

Meanwhile the dog had been immersed in the lake and flung on the grass. In a few minutes he struggled convulsively, regained his feet and staggered away into some thick reeds.

"Most extraordinary, is it not?" demanded Sir William. "A mo-

ment too long, and resuscitation would be impossible. Now come along and I'll show ye the sweating stones of San Germano."

Emma followed Sir William and Josiah for a few paces, and then turned to see if the dog was recaptured. Captain Nelson remained by the *grotta* talking by means of signs with the custodians. By keeping her eyes wide open and staring at the prospect, Emma tried to control the tears that rained down her cheeks. The barren and ashy banks of Lago d'Agnano cast sombre shadows on the dark lake, wherein flax, weighted with stones, steeped and fermented in the sulphurous water. Beyond the *Stufe di San Germano*, where Sir William and Josiah ignited dead branches in the *solfatara*, stood some ruins of Roman baths and six white stumps of a marble colonnade.

Rapid footsteps, drumming on the hollow ground, made her turn once again. Carrying the brown dog, Captain Nelson gave her a smile of triumph. "I've bought the poor little devil—I fear he is pretty well shook, but I believe your tender care, My Lady, will restore him to more than what he was."

"Did you buy him for me?"

"Do you take me to be untouched by your feelings? Indeed, Madam, I should consider myself a great wretch if I did not find means to comfort you."

Gratitude beamed from Emma's shining eyes. "No present has ever given me such joy," she said, taking the shrinking dog into her arms. It was heavy, and smelt of the volcanic gases that discoloured its coarse hair. Sir William viewed the acquisition with less enthusiasm.

"I see you indulge Emma's tender heart; but, at the risk of seeming ungracious, I must caution her against fondling the creature. More than one grotto dog has gone mad."

The Minister's warning subdued the homeward journey. Conversation was artificial, everyone tried to appear unconscious of the mongrel lurking beneath the carriage seat; only when he gave a long howl did they acknowledge his presence with soothing words.

On Saturday the officers of the *Agamemnon* dined at Court. Sir William, Emma and Captain Nelson were full dressed by half-past twelve, and set out in an open carriage for the palace. A leaping mob of *lazzaroni* tried to glimpse the conqueror of the cursed French. "*Defendstore d'Italia*" they yelled. Emma's cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkled—she was a participant in glory. . . .

The *corps diplomatique*, members of the English nobility and dis-

tinguished Neapolitans were at the banquet. In the name of her children, Queen Carolina thanked Captain Nelson. He sat in the seat of honour at the King's right hand; toasts, loyal and complimentary, were drunk, the sea officers acclaimed *Il Re d'Inghilterra* in the sailor's way: "Hip, hip, hip huzzal!" with the last drop on the nail.

On Sunday the King was to pay a state visit to the British ship and the English colony were invited to breakfast on the quarter-deck. Captain Nelson sat between the Countess of Plymouth and Emma; during the meal an urgent letter was delivered, Emma was the first to hear its contents.

"Sir John Acton reports a French man-of-war and three sail under her convoy have anchored off Sardinia," Captain Nelson whispered.

"Does that mean you'll have to go?"

"My ship's company are worn out with fatigue, but it may be necessary to show this kingdom what an English man-of-war will do."

Instead of accompanying the visitors round the ship, Emma joined a consultation between her host and Sir William. "As the Prime Minister has sent the information, unfit as my ship is, I have nothing left for the honour of our country but to sail."

"The Neapolitans have seven sail ready for sea, and there is also a Spanish frigate of 40 guns," murmured Sir William.

"But Sir John doesn't offer to send them. By sailing in a hurry I must go without the troops promised by the King."

"I'll tell the Queen that six thousand men are expected."

In less than five minutes the *Agamemnon* was transformed. Silver tea- and coffee-sets from Palazzo Sessa waited in hampers by the gangway to be put aboard the Minister's boat; the long table and the chairs had gone; seamen hauled nine-pounder guns across the deck. Harassed officers piloted the nobility over obstacles; Lady Gertrude Villiers caught her foot in a rope and fell down.

"You'll come back with us to fetch your things?" said Emma, laying her hand on Captain Nelson's arm.

"I must leave them with you, a pledge that I shall return."

"You promise?"

"Ay—I promise!"

Looking like butterflies overtaken by a storm, the fashionable guests said farewell and tottered awkwardly down the gangway. Emma and Sir William remained to the last, leaning with Captain Nelson against the bulwark.

"I hope your zeal will be crowned by success," said the Minister.

"My hopes are not sanguine. Prizes are not to be met with, except so covered by neutral papers that you may send in fifty and not one turn out good."

Sir William's barge came alongside, the hampers were carried down, also the Royal Standard of Naples supplied by the British Minister for hoisting when the King came aboard.

"I hope His Majesty has not set out."

"He'll see the Blue Peter at the fore."

As she gave her hand to Captain Nelson, Emma looked up at the flag. "I shall always hate the Blue Peter," she said.

"My Lady, it is the flag of duty." Carrying her hand to his lips, he kissed it. "Adieu, and God bless you."

From the boat they looked up at the slight, lonely figure in blue, white and gold, standing at the top of the gangway.

"Captain Nelson cannot boast of being handsome," said Sir William, "but I believe he will become one of the greatest men that ever England produced."

The *Agamemnon* lay off Torre del Greco with the smoke from Vesuvius floating in a grey banner high above her masts. Along the yards men precariously balanced or, like flies, crawled on their bellies. The jib was run up and the ship's head paid off; then the topsails were sheeted home, followed by the top-gallant sails and royals as the man-of-war gathered way and slowly proceeded out of the bay.

Palazzo Sessa struck chill and dark after the warm sunlight without. Emma wandered into the Prince's bedchamber and looked at the things Captain Nelson had left behind. His night-shirt lay neatly folded under the *zanzariere* that drooped from a gilded crown, on the chest of drawers was a black stock with the buckle sewn on in white thread, a worn hair-brush, a patch-box with a view of Portsmouth Dockyard on the lid, and a Spanish grammar. Picking up the stock, Emma smoothed it between her hands, then, carrying it, she moved to the window—the *Agamemnon* was still in sight, a ship in miniature passing between Capri and Cape Minerva.

Sir William, holding a pistol, came through the archway from the coach yard. Glancing up at the balcony, he saw Emma. "I've just had to shoot that dog Captain Nelson gave you—it's bitten a child and two of the servants."

Two days later the weather broke. Rain lashed from a colourless sky and streamed down the window-panes; distant prospects were

obscured by white mist; even the fiery crown of Vesuvius was concealed. The poor who made a dormitory of Sir William's courtyard migrated to the caves cut in the tufa of the Pizzofalcone; those who had work to do covered themselves with any rags they could find and splashed barefooted through the streets. Emma's spirits were in accord with the mournful weather. Even music failed; she could settle to nothing.

Sir William anxiously pinched her cheek. "Where are your roses? Poor Em! ye wilt like a flower without the sun."

Her dejection met with sympathy from Queen Carolina. "My dear Miledi, I know your heart; it responds to sentiment and to Nature, and makes you so valuable a friend."

The last months of the year provided Emma with opportunities to fulfill royal expectations. Tragedy and disasters were paramount. October the 16th brought defeat at Wattignies to the Austrian forces under Prince Coburg and death by the guillotine to Queen Marie Antoinette of France. Intelligence of these events reached Naples early in November.

Accompanying Sir William to the palace on a visit of condolence, Emma was gratified by a summons to the Queen's apartments. Maria Carolina sat on a throne-like chair in the *obscura*, the dark salon whither aristocratic spies and secret agents brought reports at night-fall.

The violent shock, coming in the ninth month of pregnancy, had brought on a fit of ague that every few seconds twitched her pallid, mask-like face into a grimace hovering between a simper and a leer. This Rabelaisian spasm was as little shared by her stricken soul as the depths of a lake are disturbed by ripples on its surface.

Emma, overwhelmed by compassion, held out her strong hands. Clinging to them, Carolina whispered: "You have heard?"

"Your Majesty! My dear, dear Queen! 'Tis impossible to comprehend such a vile act, to believe that even the French could be such monsters. Madam, will they never be punished for their dastardly murders?"

Maria Carolina leant back, her red and swollen eyes half closed. "May God frustrate their further villainy and cause the traitors to perish. For myself I can feel relief; anxiety is over and I need fear no more. The worst has happened."



CHAPTER NINE

ON February the 2nd, the day before Carnival, the Neapolitans had their first intimation that Toulon was evacuated, when a hundred sail, escorted by three 74's, the *Guiscardo*, *Tancredi* and *Sannite*, were sighted off Ischia. Long before the ships anchored, the populace assembled along the shore; they saw Sir John Acton go out in his barge to meet the flagship and watched him return with Marshal Fortiguerra and Prince Pignatelli.

After the troops disembarked, accounts of the evacuation circulated; the British were blamed for failure to keep Toulon, a few critics disparaged the Spaniards, everyone conceded that matters would have been much worse but for the valour of the Neapolitans. The reputation of the French Republicans grew hour by hour, alarming impressions of power were substantiated. It became known that two hundred soldiers were dead or missing, four hundred cavalry with their horses were captured, arms, tents, standards and provisions were lost. Pride in the bravery of the troops alone sustained the spirits of the people. San Carlo and the theatres were thrown open to the national heroes; vintners gave away bottles of wine; even *religieux* shared in the general feeling and convivially supported drunken defenders of the Two Sicilies.

Emma was surprised and dismayed by the stories she heard. "Caterina Castello, whose brother was on guard at an important outpost, says the English deserted them and only by praying to Sant' Antonio did they escape with their lives."

Sir William flicked snuff from his coat before he answered: "My dear, soldiers should not expect to escape with their lives. Lord Hood's dispatches and Sir Sidney Smith's narrative gave a different account of our allies from that they would have us believe. I have here an interesting letter from our King's Commissioner, my old

friend Sir Gilbert Elliot, who corroborates the other accounts. He writes:

“The Neapolitans have one small fault as soldiers, an insurmountable dislike to danger and a determination not to incur it. This peculiarity is quite as prevalent among the officers as the men. Whenever a serious attack should be made by the enemy it was certain to succeed and be absolutely impossible to recover any advantage that was lost. Contrary to repeated orders the Neapolitans quitted the Sablette Mississi, the ramparts and gates of the town and the Grosse Tour. Their cowardice and the enemy having been admitted at Fort Mulgrave by the Spanish troops, made a retreat inevitable. Accordingly the general officers held a Council of War on the night of December the 17th. A regular plan was decided on which, to succeed without opposition or loss, depended upon certain posts being withdrawn and others maintained to the end. The retreat and the embarkation of the troops was to commence at 11 o'clock on the night of the 18th.

“The Neapolitan officers, without notice to General Dundas or Gravina, or to any other person concerned, immediately packed up their luggage, and crowded the streets and quays with their preparations for departure on the evening of the 17th. Their baggage was actually sent on board; their general, Prince Pignatelli, actually embarked that evening, and the troops, quitting every post where they were stationed, continued their embarkation publically from the quays of the town from the evening of the 17th to the middle of the next day. On the forenoon of the 18th their eagerness, impatience, and panic rendered the embarkation of the inhabitants not only difficult but dangerous. Neapolitan soldiers fired on those boats which they could not get admission to, many of themselves were drowned in attempting to crowd into boats, and there was a temporary appearance of confusion and insurrection in the town. The Neapolitan Admiral Fortiguerra was in as great a haste as the military. He sailed long before either the British or Spanish squadrons, and, without waiting to make any arrangement either about troops or refugees, pushed off to Naples, leaving a good number of Neapolitan troops on board our fleet to find their way home as best they can.”

After reading the letter aloud, Sir William glanced at Emma and laughed. “The valour of the Neapolitans certainly won’t bear scrutiny.”

"'Twill break the Queen's heart to learn that her army are naught but cowards."

"Last week when I was with the King at Venasso he talked pretty freely on the matter and blames Marshal Fortiguerra for the *débâcle*. His Majesty authorized me to assure Lord Hood that if his Lordship had any further call for a Neapolitan squadron, Fortiguerra should not command it."

The Queen's sentiments were expressed by the reception prepared for the returning campaigners. A mourning wreath on the lighthouse faced the boats as they approached Porto Grande; preparations for Carnival were stayed; prayers for aid to overthrow the enemies of Christ were offered in the churches.

"Fortiguerra's conduct has been infamous!" she confided to Emma. "We must see now how he behaves; perhaps he will ask permission to resign his command, and will ask as though he meant it—the matter is by no means simple, as he is a favourite *élève* of the Chevalier Acton, who brought him here from the Tuscan service."

"'Tis to be hoped Marshal Fortiguerra will do the right thing and retire, for his haughty ways please no one. Many soldiers have told me that if their officers had been like the English officers the nation would not have been reproached," Emma said with disarming frankness.

"Ah! that is what I admire, your boldness, Miledi! You say the truth. Not many about a Court speak from the heart, I can assure you. And you are right, the Italians do not make good leaders; if I had my way I would entrust all responsible posts to Austrian officers; we should then be victorious on land and sea, instead of disgraced in the eyes of all!"

With her feet on a perforated brass box full of hot ashes, the Queen sat in a high-backed chair suckling her infant daughter, who was swaddled like an Egyptian mummy. Nothing about the baby was visible except its head; solid as a block of wood, it seemed to be without arms, legs or petticoats. Bandages also gave Maria Carolina a rigid appearance; her left breast had been opened and cleansed of a tumour, an annual accompaniment to fecundity. "This child," she said, looking down at the pink, puckered face, "will be just of an age to marry the Empress's son, born last April; I only wish I could hear that my other daughter, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, had 'a great belly', as the Neapolitans say."

"She is so young."

"No royal consort should delay providing an heir; till that is done one is never secure," said the ruling woman, propping the infant against a chair while she re-hooked her stomacher.

The Government inquiry into the allegations made by Lord Hood and General Dundas against the Neapolitan officers was conducted in the utmost secrecy, and Sir William could glean nothing to report to Lord Grenville, Secretary of State, until March the 5th, when he wrote indignantly:

"The Marshal Fortiguerra instead of having been punished has obtained a letter from General Acton in which His Excellency acquaints him that His Sicilian Majesty is perfectly satisfied with the answer he has given to Lord Hood's accusations of his behaviour at the evacuation of Toulon and compliments him on his great naval and military talents. This letter, the Marshal, as may well be imagined, has shown to all his friends, and a copy of it has even reached me. . . . In this business, as is but too often the case, private friendships and animosities have interfered and been detrimental to public affairs."

Having expunged with a coat of whitewash the adverse reports on their admiral, the Neapolitan Government was free to devote attention to vengeance on the French Republic. New conscripts and civic guards were raised in the city; eight thousand cavalry and infantry were encamped on the Plain of Sessa. The kingdom had forty-two thousand troops of the line under arms and an even greater reserve of militia; the navy comprised forty sea-going ships and one hundred and forty gun-boats. The strain of maintaining this enormous armament was beginning to be felt; canards started by Republican sympathizers accused the Queen and Acton of robbing the people in order that liberty and justice might be suppressed. These charges were countered by authoritative rumours that the cost of safeguarding the Sicilies was being met, not by the people, but by the privy purse and by the sale of the Queen's jewels. Soon everyone knew that the diamonds bravely glittering in the lights at San Carlo were nothing but glass counterfeits of originals exchanged for English gold. For this sacrifice the *lazzaroni* esteemed Maria Carolina almost as much as they loved Ferdinando; even the workers ceased to grumble at the high cost of inferior food. The royal family set an example, and it became a matter of pride that British men-of-war,

guarding the coasts of Italy, should look to Naples for new masts and yards, for gunpowder and arms.

On March the 25th the Government was thrown into alarm by discovering a plot to overthrow the Monarchy. Action was immediately taken. Two Neapolitan Ships of the Line and four frigates ordered to join Captain Nelson off Bastia were told to remain in harbour; on shore the state police worked all night, and by morning the underground dungeons of the Vicaria were tenanted by noblemen, savants and government servants.

The Court was at Caserta to benefit by country tranquillity during Lent, but in a few hours peace had changed into the bustle of an armed camp. Soldiers' accoutrements were piled high in the village square, horses were tethered in the street, sentries guarded all entrances to the palace and the park was constantly patrolled.

"Everything is being conducted with the utmost secrecy," Sir William reported to Emma, "but so far as I can penetrate, the conspiracy was conceived while Monsieur de Mackau was Minister, and has since been conducted through the agency of a club of persons of Jacobin principles with money received from Paris. The plan was no less than to murder the Sovereigns and introduce that ideal happiness of Liberty and Equality which is tearing France to pieces at this moment."

Emma shuddered. "Planning to stab the Queen! It makes me sick to think of it."

"Their Sicilian Majesties are remarkably calm, but the King seems much surprised that one of his subjects could be found to execute such a heinous crime."

"And Pietro di Falco to be that one!" Emma answered in shocked tones. "My God, I supposed physicians were like clergy, above murder and politics!"

"This strange cult of Liberty and Equality is a crusade to those who become its disciples. Doubtless Falco believed his opportunities as Court physician rendered it obligatory to strike at the enemies of the people."

Rising at cock-crow on Thursday morning, Sir William drove to Naples to gather information for the King and Queen, nervously sleeping with their children in two rooms of the vast palace, as if the shadow of the guillotine already pointed to eternal separation. Late in the evening the Minister returned with reassuring reports of arrests. "Between thirty and forty are in prison, none of them of

great nobility or consideration, most of the conspirators are young hot-heads under twenty-four."

"Did you hear the names?" Carolina muttered with pale lips.

"Some!" answered Sir William, swinging his quizzing-glass as he lounged in his chair. "Vincenzo Vitaliano, Emanuele di Deo, and Vincenzo Galliani seem the most deeply implicated. With them is Annibale Giordano, professor of mathematics at Gesu Vecchio."

"He incited them to it!" said the King in an angry falsetto. "Some of the prisoners have already confessed that it was their schoolmasters who instilled Jacobin principles into them. It was the men of learning who started all the trouble in France. *Jesu Maria!* How much better Europe would have been without education; *fiesta, forza e farina*, say I."

The Queen flushed and changed the subject. "Thanks be to God, we were accorded Divine protection. Had the ships sailed for Bastia and reduced our force, the dastardly Jacobins would have come out in hundreds, each eager to stab us in our beds."

As the month advanced Their Majesties and Sir John Acton became less communicative. Eighty suspected persons were in custody, unknown numbers escaped into Papal territory; a State Junta was instituted to try persons accused of treason.

The necessity of sending mortars and other artillery to Lord Hood frequently called Sir William to town; during his absence Emma, as the Queen's trusted friend, learnt how much could be said though all was withheld. The splash of water down the cascade was no more continuous than Her Majesty's conversation, but only when speaking of the Republican forces were her words unguarded. "Has your ladyship heard that the French have entered a port of the Genoese State and are likewise masters of Oneglia? No troops appear able to stand up to the villains. It seems they must enjoy the devil's support."

"Wait till the French ships come out—then we shall beat them."

"I too have great faith in the brave British sailors. I wish we might have another visit from Captain Nelson. There was a man who feared nothing!"

"All he wished was to meet the enemy!"

Daily, and in the utmost secrecy, the *giunta* conducted examinations and consigned the guilty to prison dungeons, yet the judges could not keep abreast of the incoming tide of suspects. Eighty-two arrests were made in Calabria, and a Dominican friar was apprehended in the palace at Caserta. In such a dangerous situation the

Government was loath to reduce its forces by seven hundred Neapolitan seamen promised to Lord Hood, and the *Princess Royal* left port without them.

"Although the discovery has caused much alarm, I am satisfied that the Jacobin conspiracy has been crushed in its infancy," said Sir William optimistically. "There is not the smallest fermentation among the lower class of people."

He was right, but the first man to be executed publicly was not a noble traitor, but Tommaso Amato, a poor man of Messina, who, on San Pasquale's *fiesta*, leapt upon the altar at Santa Maria del Carmine to curse God and vow death to the royal family. The people would have torn him to pieces had not the military intervened and escorted him to the adjacent fortress, where he was tried and condemned.

The manner of Tommaso's expulsion from this sphere was considered sufficiently important to warrant Sir John Acton's attention. The Prime Minister inspected the gilt-and-red lacquer gallows set up in Lago del Mercato; he ordered another load of faggots for the funeral pyre.

"Due to the ancient mode of private execution, no idea exists of its beastliness," he observed to Sir William Hamilton, as they stood looking down on the mob from a window in the Carmine. "This sight should make a good effect on Jacobins formulating more devilment."

Crowds in vivid holiday clothes scuffled for places round the glittering scaffold, market-people recklessly left their stalls to watch blindfolded Tommaso led by the rope up the ladder to fly into space at a kick from the hangman. Laughing, they pointed to a ruff of flesh dragged upwards from Tommaso's slowly elongating neck; they laughed, too, at the executioner's drollery as he clambered with a long, glittering knife up the gaily painted gallows.

At the second blow the body fell, but the head rolled away to the church door. In the race to capture it the hangman was first; as he grasped the lolling tongue he deftly cut it out—a souvenir of blasphemy. "*Viva la religione, viva il Re,*" yelled the populace as the remains of the wicked Tommaso were consigned to the fire. Flames, leaping into the air, shrivelled the flowers on market-stalls and frightened the doves that wheeled against the turquoise sky. The crowd became quieter; through the open windows of the Carmine sounded

the voices of priests jabbering prayers to appease the wrath of God for the profanation of His temple.

Sir William and General Acton descended the campanile and emerged blinking into the strong light. They turned towards Porta del Carmine. Under the arch Sir John paused to look back at the diversely coloured buildings surrounding the *largo*, at the gay awnings, the flowers and the holiday dresses of the people. His eyes strayed to the funeral pyre throbbing and glowing like the crater of Vesuvius. "This morning our Cardinal-Archbishop endeavoured to convert Tommaso, but he spat in his Eminence's face, saying he would believe in nothing but Robespierre." Contemplatively Sir John rubbed his ill-shaven chin. "Did you notice young Guglielmo Pepe and Wirtz, an Ensign in Dillon's, watching the execution?"

"Both looked rather sick; I wonder they came."

"To-day's spectacle should have a discouraging effect."

"Unless it creates a desire for martyrdom," the British Minister dryly retorted.

Emma and Sir William delayed their return to Naples till the end of May, taking a hazard to support their royal friends. Flax, macerating in the marsh of Acerra, rendered the air of Caserta injurious throughout the summer months.

"But this year my children must risk the danger of malaria," Queen Carolina decided: "Caserta offers means of defence and escape. At Palazzo Reale we could be trapped as were the King and Queen of France in the Tuileries."

On returning to the capital Emma cultivated her friendship with Elizabeth Billington, who had taken the Banti's place as first woman at San Carlo. At twenty-six the English singer looked fresh and lovely despite a strenuous career that, beginning in early childhood, had been interrupted only by her association with the late Duke of Rutland.

"My dear, the Duke was the best man that ever breathed, positively he was!" she confided to Emma. "And he died at thirty-three, all through making it a habit to eat seven turkey eggs for breakfast and drinking more wine than any competitor! Never was a Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland better chosen to conciliate that convivial kingdom. Sure it killed him—drink always kills, that's what I'm for ever telling my husband. But he won't stop—no man ever stops for a woman's tongue, especially when wine is cheaper than water, as it is here. Lud! Why should I bother?"

James Billington, a double-bass player, ten years older than his sparkling wife, turned his tallow-coloured face in order to wink with a lack-lustre eye. "Zounds, Betty, I've told ye that good wine pickles a man."

Three days later the musician dined at Mrs. North's, and died as he rose from dessert. Emma insisted on bringing the widow to Palazzo Sessa. "'Tis only Christian," she said in answer to Sir William's mild protests. "Mrs. Billington has no one to look to except us. Some day I may be in a like plight, then thankful I'd be for a friend."

"I hope, my dear, that your charitable act will be remembered by her, and repaid if necessary!"

On George III's birthday Elizabeth Billington was sufficiently consoled to join Emma in singing the National Anthem. More than sixty English were assembled at the British Minister's; so many loyal toasts were drunk that the broken glasses formed a pyramid in the centre of the table. After Emma and the Billington sat down, Sir William rose and unfolded a sheet of paper. "I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of transmitting this letter which my wife has just had the honour of receiving from the Queen of Naples. Her Majesty says:

"'Make my compliments to all the company. Tell them that I would fain begin first and from my heart the song of "God save great George our King!" that I wish and desire all happiness to the King, to whom I have vowed a friendship without limits, as well as the highest esteem and confidence to the brave loyal English nation, who will save Europe from this scourge which menaces it. I am delighted that the alliance, which the King my Husband has formed with your Court and Nation, permits me to express the sentiments which I have always cherished in my heart towards her.'"

The British Envoy sat down amid gratified murmurs; instantly Emma leapt to her feet and sprang upon a chair.

"My Lords! My Ladies!" she cried, "I give you another toast—not the Queen of the Two Sicilies, whom we have already respectfully honoured, but the noblest woman in the world, my ever-adored Queen Carolina!"

The guests looked surprised, but obediently replenished fresh glasses. Elevated above them, Emma sang again, but this time it was the National Anthem of the Sicilies. She wore her diamonds and a

clinging white dress which displayed her lovely figure. In this she was not singular; fashion had undergone a remarkable transformation. For some years preceding the revolution gowns were distinguished by superfluity in dimensions and stiffness; in 1794 costume had suddenly changed to extreme lightness. The waist, which had been long, diminished until it disappeared altogether, the breasts, instead of being thickly covered, were allowed to protrude naked from the robe. A muslin turban wound round the head and adorned with one, two, or three very tall feathers was worn by practically every woman.

"Indeed, to look at some of them you'd never think they was respectable," Emma indignantly told Sir William when the party was over.

"Certainly little of the female form is left to the imagination, and the transparent shift that does duty for a gown rivals the costume among the ancients of which Horace told us:

'—*Cois tibi pæne videre est,
Ut nudam.*'"

The licentious French fashions, so much more popular than the doctrine of liberty, made but a brief appearance. The Court again ordered society into mourning, this time for the sister of Louis XVI, Madame Elizabeth, guillotined on the 12th of May. Emma replaced her blue sashes with black ribbons, and, armed with a chaplet of immortelles, set out for Caserta. She passed poor people tramping towards the city, seeking in busy thoroughfares food that the land would not yield. In many districts the crops had failed, and the large supplies required by the armed forces of the Sicilies and her allies made grave inroads into reserves. In Naples the price of provisions was judiciously lowered to avoid all cause of complaint, but the influx from the country threatened to defeat the primary object of keeping the *lazzaroni* in good humour.

The plodding weary peasants and a curious yellow light that robbed every tree and plant of colour quenched Emma's natural buoyancy. Views that had seemed charming in sunlight assumed a sinister appearance. Broken columns, flights of steps, a cupola festooned with vines—all that was left of the Oscan city of Atella—looked evil as the ruins of Babylon, and Vanvitelli's white aqueducts conveying water from the mountains to the cascades at Caserta loomed like ghostly arches to the underworld. As the road wound,

affording a view of Vesuvius, Emma looked back at the ominous pine tree of smoke above the crater. Rising to a great height in the form of a trunk, it extended at the top into branches. Orange and green lights played upon it; sometimes it became dark and spotted, as earth and cinders shot up with loud reports. When this happened the poor people tramping to the city pointed at the mountain and talked excitedly. Some of them turned back.

At the palace great anxiety prevailed; King Ferdinando was on the roof watching through a telescope; the Queen walked distractedly up and down the long portico which pierced the length of the palace. When Emma arrived, Carolina took her by the arm and resumed the agitated march. "If Providence gives us an eruption, it is more than Job was asked to suffer. Oh, Miledi, take these for my sake—the King laughs, but I assure you they are most efficacious to avert disaster and for protection." As she spoke she thrust upon Emma a handful of charms, amulets and votive offerings; little strips of silk engrossed with appeals to the Holy Virgin, bits of ebony and ivory engraved with the mark of the Cross or a holy name, and slips of rice-paper bearing pious ejaculations. Emma had seen the edible prayers before; she picked them out and obligingly swallowed them.

"If we take all precautions, the danger may be averted," the Queen continued. "We could not face the expenses that fall on the Crown when the lava flows freely. Every man who has a few vines on the mountain side comes to us to be compensated, and already we are having to consider new forms of taxation. Much against our will, we have decided to command the churches and convents to resign all consecrated plate to the Royal Mint, excepting what is necessary for Divine ordinances. Though we expect much will be realized in this manner, the amount will soon be exhausted by our heavy naval and military commitments."

The sharp talismans inside Emma's stays spoilt her day without mollifying the demons of the mountain. That night an earthquake shook the city, and with a sound like a crack of doom a large fissure opened down the western flank of Vesuvius. Men and women rushed into the streets, adding lamentations to the groans and rumbling of the volcano.

Flinging himself upon the floor, Sir William directed Emma to do likewise. Crash after crash announced the fate of Etruscan and Greek vases; pictures swung from the walls; furniture slid back and forth. The long night passed slowly, rendered fearful by gigantic

sighs and hollow subterranean mutterings. Dawn broke calmly, but light was faint. During the morning stones and liquid lava were thrown from the crater; presently a sheet of fire accompanied by globes of black cloud shot up to a height three times that of the mountain. The black vapour spread and formed a canopy shot with continuous flashes of silver-blue forked lightning. By noon the entire sky was obscured—nothing remained visible but a calyx of flame from Vesuvius.

The air grew hot and difficult to breathe, windows were closed, but fine ashes could not be excluded, and everything was quickly covered with gritty powder. Monks and nuns chanting penitential psalms paraded the street, panic-stricken people crowned themselves with thorns and struggled barefooted through falling ashes to San Gennaro's shrine on Ponte Maddalena. Cries of penitent prostitutes wailing *Misericordia* blended with the howls of cowed, half-naked flagellants, scourging each other until blood dripped. Such efforts at appeasement had no effect; for three days and nights cinders and ashes continued to descend from utter darkness.

In the interests of science and the Royal Society, Sir William narrowly observed through a telescope every phase of the eruption. In the night of the 15th a fresh earthquake and loud detonations accompanied the opening of several new craters below the old cone; from each poured streams of liquid lava which united as they approached the plain. The threat to Torre del Greco was at once apparent. In response to a deputation, the Cardinal Archbishop agreed that San Gennaro's golden statue and the phials of the saint's blood should be carried in procession to the bridge over the Sebeto. But the lava was so unusually fluid that it raced solemn preparations for intervention.

"'Naples commits the sins, Torre pays for them,'" murmured Sir William, quoting the old proverb.

"But in the great eruption you watched in 1779 'twas Ottaiano that suffered, on the other side of the mountain," Emma argued.

"Ay, but since Torre del Greco was first destroyed in 1631, it has been buried and rebuilt innumerable times, which accounts for the new town being at least two hundred feet above the old houses on the seaboard."

Taking turns at the telescope, Emma and Sir William watched the molten river passing through the centre of the upper town, casting, as it advanced, a throbbing ruby light on the track to be consumed.

The lava stream was forty feet deep and proceeded in overlapping folds; in a few minutes it overwhelmed the picturesque houses massed on the top of the plateau and the statue of the Virgin which looked down the ramp to the old port. On the brink of the escarpment the lava halted, gathering momentum to tumble in a cascade of purple flame upon the buildings round the shore. Again the flood of fire crept forward in treacherous folds; inundating churches, convents, boat-yards and dwellings. Again the lava was stationary, consolidating before plunging into the sea. When the impact came, the water rolled back on itself; all sounds were quenched by the blast of steam that rose in a geyser higher than the mountain.

Sir William looked at his watch. "This must be a record. The lava has travelled from the crater to the sea in six hours—a distance of four miles."

In the late afternoon the dreadful darkness dissipated. A pale sun appeared, muted as if in eclipse; a pall of white ash covered every cape and mountain; the sea was blanched by a layer of floating pumice. The eruption had also effected lasting changes—Vesuvius had lost its summit and no longer dominated Mount Somma, which now towered higher. Torre del Greco was obliterated, but projecting into the sea from the site of the old Marina was a mole of lava, a quarter of a mile wide and twenty-five metres long.

On the 17th Sir William embarked in a *felucca* to inspect the new promontory, but was forced back by the water boiling around it, which melted the pitch on the boat's bottom. Balking in his object, he landed at the mouth of the Sebeto to converse with refugees from the mountain slopes, gathered round San Gennaro's shrine on the bridge over the river.

"All were convinced that the Saint's intervention saved us from greater calamities. But the damage already done is sufficiently severe," Sir William reported to Emma. "Many are believed to have perished—and thousands of animals, yet the people of Greco only wait until the lava cools to build again. Already they have appealed to the King for financial aid, but, short of another miracle, I am puzzled how it can be met from resources already strained to the uttermost."

"Last time I was at Caserta the Queen told me of a plan to pay for the war by boiling down the spare plate from convents and churches."

"That is being done, and this morning I learned that the Government contemplates a patriotic levy upon communities for the national

benefit, on the lines of the generous offer made in April by the lawyers. This will doubtless provide a considerable yield, as the names of the donors are to be emblazoned outside the Vicaria."

"If money is so short, will the Sicilies be able to go on fighting?"

"Lack of money, my dear Em, never prevents the prosecution of a war."

The financial strain of heavy naval and military commitments was vindicated by a substantial victory for the Allied cause. On learning of it, the Queen hastened to inform Emma:

"A letter of the 10th of June announces to us that Lord Howe has completely beaten the French fleet, that he has taken seven vessels, one of which afterwards sunk. Admiral Graves was wounded in the arm. Admirals Pasley and Bowyer have each lost a leg, proving their bravery. May God prosper our brave allies as I desire. My attachment for your nation is very sincere. A thousand compliments to the Chevalier, and believe me your very attached and sincere friend, *Charlotte*."

"How good she is!" Emma's voice betokened her sense of obligation. "We'd have felt very grateful for the news if Greville hadn't told us already."

"Ay, dear Charles! He is always so thoughtful for others. His letter gave me great satisfaction; my refusal to give him *carte blanche* in the management of my estate I feared might be taken amiss."

"Greville would risk too much for future gain—all you want is to be left comfortable on what you have."

"In these extraordinary times it is necessary to husband one's resources, and I've never seen Charles derive much benefit from his speculations. Indeed, his case is the hardest I ever heard of: his is the fate of the hare with many friends in *Gay's Fables*."

The royal family remained at Caserta, ostensibly because the country palace was a post royal nearer the camp at Sessa where cavalry, consisting of eighteen hundred men, were in readiness to embark for Leghorn to join the Imperial army in Lombardy. The French were in possession of Piedmont, an invasion additionally critical for Italy on account of the apathy and disunion among the States. Naples alone made preparations, and a new levy to embrace the provinces was authorized.

"No Sovereign behaves more infamously than my son-in-law the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who entered into diplomatic relations with

the dastardly French almost as his aunt was murdered," said Queen Carolina bitterly.

"The Grand Duke is foolish as well as wrong," Emma answered, "because he makes enemies nearer home."

"Foolish? Indeed you are right—but Ferdinando III takes after the Bourbons. Again and again I write to my daughter, telling her to procure more becoming conduct on the part of her husband, and Luigia Amalia answers that she cannot understand politics, so does not interfere. Politics! as if revolution, murder and the conquest of one State after another, was merely a question of politics!"

"We have some comfort," Emma consoled. "Calvi has surrendered, which gives us the whole of Corsica. 'Twas such a siege as never was, for Captain Nelson had the management of it, and there is no officer in the Service as has such courage and resource."

"Does the gallant Captain Nelson come to Naples to recover from the fatigues he has suffered?"

"Alas! No. The *Agamemnon* refits at Leghorn, because the ship's company are wore out. There are many sick of fevers, and the lieutenant who brought dispatches to Sir Will'um says the rest look no better than so many phantoms. Captain Nelson is the only one who has not suffered from the 'Lion Sun', as the hot season is call'd, but the wound he got on shore when an enemy shot hit his battery did more harm than he pretended, for he has nearly lost the sight of his right eye."

"But, Miledi, that is terrible! He should have attention instantly! Tell him to come here, where he can be advised by skilled physicians."

"He will not come at my bidding, Ma'am. 'Tis said that he sails for England with My Lord Hood, who only awaits his successor before taking leave."

Once a week Emma drove out to Caserta to dine with the Queen and afterwards to help in making charpic for the wounded. Every afternoon the princesses and Court ladies tore up old linen sheets and drew out alternate threads until the fabric resembled gauze. In this occupation Maria Carolina took no part: the ague to which she was a martyr rendered her hands unfit for such exacting work.

Caserta, shunned in the hot months because of dangers from malaria, was now less unhealthy than Naples. For weeks after the eruption, Vesuvius poured out a stupendous column of vapour charged with fine white ash which a strong *scirocco* carried over the city. Descending in torrents of heavy rain, it covered the whole

country with volcanic mud, several old houses in the poor quarters subsided beneath the weight, and it was necessary constantly to sweep the roofs lest they collapsed. Over five thousand acres of rich vineyards were destroyed, adding to the number of refugees seeking food and shelter in the capital. Bilious fevers were prevalent, the countenances of the homeless and destitute were yellow-green and ghostly, and many poor vagrants found their deathbeds on the ashes that heaped the narrow streets. Crops had failed in every part of the kingdom; to this calamity was added a lack of specie in the banks. *Fedi di credito* for large amounts were only changed for smaller bills; the total want of coin caused great confusion and raised universal murmurs of discontent: no one could get money for a bill under five per cent. loss.

"Things have really got beyond endurance," said Sir William with unwonted petulance; "the bank would only give me a hundred and fifty ducats in silver, and that as a great favour, on a bank-bill of two thousand ducats. I've told Acton something must be done, and he says a *giunta* is being appointed. But the banks may fail first—forms of law are so very tedious in this country, as exemplified by the process against the conspirators arrested last March."

"Have none of those traitorous wretches been sentenced?" Emma asked incredulously.

"I believe some are gone to the State prison at San Stefano and others to the fortress at Nisida, but so far not one has been condemned to death."

"'Tis great mercy."

"I think not; were my only choice a swift death or lifelong confinement in a damp dungeon, I should not hesitate to choose death."

The Minister's acerbity was the prelude to a severe attack of dysentery caused by the vapours from Vesuvius. Emma also fell a victim to the prevalent complaint. Her sufferings were severe, but, being of stouter build, she better sustained the toll upon her constitution than did Sir William, who had no surplus flesh. He was quickly reduced to so low an ebb that Emma feared for his life. Sustained by her will, she insisted on sharing the nursing with Mrs. Cadogan and Gaetano Spedillo.

Lying gaunt and yellow in the vast bed, with closed eyes and open mouth, Sir William's age had come upon him. Emma was overwhelmed by the discovery; in an instant life altered its perspective. Her husband was old. . . .

Starting to snore, Sir William awakened himself. "My dear, I'm feeling a little better!"

"Thank God!" Emma fervently responded as she rose to bring him a drink of whey. Looking down as she held the cup to his lips, she noticed with a pang the network of lines round his eyes and his lids drooping at the outer corners. He drank greedily, and with his tongue made elderly sounds of satisfaction.

Thenceforth Sir William's recovery was rapid; in three days he was able to deal with accumulated correspondence. Among the waiting letters was one from Greville, announcing his appointment as Vice-Chamberlain to His Majesty King George III. Prostrated by a sick headache, Emma lackadaisically received the glad tidings.

"Charles should now be able to overcome all his difficulties, as the salary is something substantial. Fetch the *English Register*, my love, it will tell us."

While Sir William searched for the information, Emma leant her aching head against the cool stonework of the window and idly looked down at ragged men, high-fronted country carts and grotesque jumarts, all leisurely employed in clearing the courtyard of ashes. Everything and everywhere was covered with a thick paste of grey mud; gardeners mounted on ladders worked briskly with scrubbing-brushes on the leaves of cedatri and Judas trees.

"The office of Vice-Chamberlain carries with it one thousand one hundred and fifty-nine pounds nine shillings and four pence per annum," Sir William reported. "That, with his annuity of five hundred pounds, should make Charles tolerably comfortable and relieve him from trying to squeeze a subsidiary revenue from my Pembroke estate."

"Indeed 'twill be a vast income, and should suffice for all his obligations."

Covertly Sir William gave her a shrewd glance. "If you are thinking of your young protégée, my dear, I'd advise you not to look to Charles to resume his responsibilities. And why should he, my love? When I am happy to defray the trifling amount of her upkeep?"

It was not so easy for Emma to put the matter from her mind, and in the ensuing weeks she had leisure to brood upon the daughter she had carelessly begotten.

During Sir William's illness Queen Carolina evinced great solicitude, sending from Caserta twice daily for bulletins. When convalescence was announced she insisted that it should be spent at

the Royal Casino of *Quissana* on the hill behind Castel-à-Mare, a place held in high repute by Neapolitan physicians on account of twelve mineral springs efficacious in various disorders. While Sir William bathed in *Acqua Media* and imbibed it in long draughts, Emma wandered through chestnut groves to the dockyard, where a frigate was building, or, taking the path to the Convent of Pozzano, perched herself on an ancient altar to Diana outside the church. Her eyes scanned the lovely view of the bay, the plain from Nocera to the foot of Vesuvius and the mountains beyond Sarno and Nola. Not often had she time to think; through lack of practice her reflections lacked cohesion and constructive form.

Little Emma must now be going on for thirteen—the same age as her mother when she took service with Mrs. Thomas. . . . Things were different then. . . . There had been no money to do aught else. . . . Young Emma Hart should be better situated with a mother who had two hundred a year for nonsense, and a rich courtier for a father. . . . 'Twas strange the way things turned out. . . . That Jack Payne should become Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales and Greville Vice-Chamberlain to the King. . . . Either way Emma had a father high up in the world. . . . 'Twas Greville, and not Willett Payne. . . . A woman couldn't be mistaken about that. . . . Greville had thought so too, though he denied it. . . . Now there was money he might relent, for 'twas not right that Sir Will'um should pay for the girl. . . . Greville should be pleased to do it, too, as atonement for deceiving a loving heart. . . . Writing in this mood, Emma's congratulatory letter firmly reminded Greville of his obligations:

"Now your pecuniary circumstances are so favourable I know it will be your pleasure to settle little Emma in some suitable way, for you will say it is not right she should be poor and perhaps unhappy when her parents is comfortably and honnerably situated."

Having got thus far, courage failed. . . . Greville had never admitted responsibility. . . . Always he made it clear that in supporting the child he acted charitably. . . . And how could that be denied? . . . It didn't do to make demands on a man. . . . If justice was granted it must be received as a favour. . . .

Crumpling the letter into a ball, Emma dropped it into the bottom of her work-box. On a fresh sheet of paper, she wrote the date, September 16th, 1794, and began again:

"I congratulate you, my dear Mr. Greville, with all my heart on your appointment to the Vice-Chamberlainship. You have well merited it, and all your friends must be happy at a change, so favourable not only for your pecuniary circumstances, as for the honner of the situation. . . ."

Thoroughly recovered in health, Sir William and Emma returned at the end of the month to Naples before proceeding to Caserta. In their absence events had moved with unusual speed. The *giunta*, acting with celerity, had unmasked a conspiracy between the cash-keepers of two banks to conceal a deficiency of a million ducats. After a trial lasting six months, three of the Neapolitan conspirators were condemned to death and the rest sentenced to life imprisonment in the island fortresses with which the Sicilian domains were handsomely endowed by former rulers.

"Now punishment has been apportioned we may hope for peace within our own borders," the Queen said in a cheerless voice, "and we have to be thankful that the French appear to make no further progress on the confines of Lombardy. Our agents also send encouraging reports of discontent in the southern provinces against the present constitution."

"I don't believe these rumours of dissatisfaction in France," the King's falsetto voice intervened. "Why should the people be discontented, when their Government is gobbling up Europe as fast as it can?"

In confidential talks with Emma, the Queen spoke of her husband's waning enthusiasm for war. "The expenses of our armaments must reduce the amount available for the *chasse*, but we have no alternative, unless we choose to become a vassal State of the vile French republicans. As you know, my husband and his brother the King of Spain maintain a regular correspondence, and from remarks he lets fall I suspect attempts are being made to break our alliance with England."

"But why, Ma'am? Spain is on our side, and we all oppose the cursed French."

"For the moment!" Maria Carolina answered bitterly; "at heart Spain is ever the enemy of Britain, and Spain is ruled by Manuel de Godoy!"

On the 18th of October three ringleaders in the plot to murder the royal family were executed in Largo del Castello. When the last was

hanged a general groan was heard, and the report of a musket, prelude to a fusillade. The mob rushed in confusion up the narrow streets to the place of execution. Taking it for granted that the frightened people intended an assault, the pickets of the garrison fired upon them. Five men and two women were killed on the spot; six of the wounded died that night in hospital. The poor, who provided the largest number of victims, showed no resentment, and cheerfully attended the fine funerals paid for out of the privy purse. It was otherwise with the Jacobins, who made capital of the incident as a new proof of despotism.

Domestic anxieties were augmented by a report that four ships of the line with several frigates and small craft had slipped out of Toulon. Sant' Elmo prepared for the attack, further arrests were made of suspected persons, their Majesties disappointed the public who were privileged to watch them dine on the *fiesta* of San Carlo.

Leaving the Queen, Sir John Acton and Prince Caramanico, Viceroy of Sicily, to concert measures for the national safety, Ferdinando, assisted by Sir William, decimated the larks that frequented the Camp of Hannibal. Emma expostulated at the destruction of the birds she loved, but Sir William answered: "I take all good and bad with His Sicilian Majesty, rather than not have some inducement to be out in the air, which I find of service to my health. But I'll confess it goes somewhat against my feelings, as I prefer the melody of a lark's tongue to the dish it provides."

"Then I wish you'd go riding instead, which would do you more good and hurt none."

"That would put me to the expense of buying saddle-horses, and until I can get some of the money owing to me I cannot make any increase in our way of living. I do not see that one farthing has been paid into Ross's hands from the estate these two years. I wish Charles would send me some account of what has been expended at Milford on the inn and landing-place; *je n'en comprend rien*."

A letter from Captain Nelson to Sir William having allayed immediate fears of a French attack, the Court hoped for tranquillity over Christmas.

The opera company of San Carlo was transferred to the theatre within the palace; the principal nobility was established in their country villas; Lord Bristol stayed with Sir William and Emma; Prince Augustus Frederick was to be a royal guest.

After the invitation had been accepted, Ferdinando was oppressed

by doubt. "I am told the Prince's marriage is annulled and his allowance will be stopped if he returns to England or the lady comes to Italy. I should not like to think he may incur further censure by occupying apartments in a foreign palace."

"Your Majesty's condescension to His Royal Highness will be most gratifying to my master, the King of England," Sir William suavely rejoined.

"A royal prince should be suitably married before his sixteenth year," Ferdinando asserted; "afterwards he can choose mistresses to his taste."

The marriage between Prince Augustus and Lady Augusta Murray, solemnized in Rome, had been followed some twenty months later by a repetition of the ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square. The birth of a son in December 1793 set in operation the Royal Marriage Act.

"There is something paradoxical in the character of my foster-brother," Sir William mused aloud as he strolled home through the moonlight with Emma. "Having himself been thwarted in love, he might be expected to sympathize with his sons, especially as a match with the Earl of Dunmore's daughter would disgrace no prince in Europe."

Emma was preoccupied and did not respond. During the evening spent at the palace Maria Carolina had been more than usually gracious, though much perturbed by a volume of secret memoirs published in Paris which purported to be an authentic account of the Neapolitan Court.

"The Queen has lent me Count Gorani's cursed book, because she wants me to know the odious things said of her. I answered I wouldn't believe one word, and I know I shall put myself quite out of humour by learning that a good and virtuous princess can have such lies told about her."

"My dear, you are an incurable partizan—your swans must all be very white. Yet I suspect the Queen has enjoyed *amours* like the rest of us."

"I won't believe it; she is everything one can wish—the best mother, wife and friend in the world."

"Sweetheart! Illicit embraces need not stifle the orthodox virtues!"

Sir William, Emma and Mrs. Cadogan met the British Royal Duke and his suite at Capua. He greeted them cordially and kissed Mrs. Cadogan. Taking him close to a carriage lamp, the motherly woman

scrutinized his face. "You look worn," she said. Actually he was fatter than before.

On the following morning Prince Augustus arrived at Sir William's villa in time for breakfast. He wore a heavy gold ring and was dressed in a fashionable zebra vest, breeches buttoning close down the legs, an enormous cravat and a large hat turned up at the sides: a costume accentuating his girth.

"Well, we are happy to see you," said Emma, suppressing a desire to laugh.

"You're looking well, and I hear you're magnificently in voice. I mean to devote myself to my music, for one must have some outlet for one's emotions. You'll have heard that I am in the painful position of being a husband yet a bachelor; a father and yet a wretch who must remain a stranger to his child. It is a year this day since my dear Augusta and Dr. Thymme between them brought my son into the world."

Sir William patted the afflicted parent on the back. "*Entre nous*, my dear Prince; the Royal Marriage Act is a most odious measure and a vile anomaly in British jurisprudence."

"It hits us all cruelly. You know my brother George is to marry the daughter of our Aunt Augusta of Brunswick-Wolfenbützel?"

"I was apprised of it."

"And you know his *circumstances*, so can guess how the arrangement will turn out."

The King and Queen of Naples treated Prince Augustus like a family connexion, so strong was the alliance that bound them to England. Boar-hunts were organized in his honour, balls and dinners were given for his entertainment, but he liked best to ride on horseback over the Campania. For a long time the Queen had supplied Emma with horses, an equerry and a servant in the royal livery; now the British prince and the English Ambassadors rode together and conversed.

"How would you feel if you had a child and were forced to part with it?" he wistfully inquired.

Emma flushed, bit her lip and answered reluctantly: "Anguished at the beginning, forgetful as time passed."

"I shall never forget."

"You will," said Emma.



CHAPTER TEN

THE New Year was welcomed hopefully, but soon displayed a bias for the worst. Queen Carolina's reputation suffered severely from the scurrilous attacks made by "Citoyen" Joseph Gorani in his *Mémoires*, secretly circulating among the nobility who could read French. In the boxes at San Carlo the names of former paramours were whispered behind fans; men significantly smiled and glanced toward Sir John Acton.

Gossip received impetus from the sudden death at Palermo of Prince Caramanico, cited in the memoirs as the lover who was supplanted by the foreign adventurer now directing the policy of the Sicilies. Reports that the Viceroy had committed suicide to escape an accusation of treason, formulated by his rival, were countered with rumours of murder by poison. The Jacobins favoured both theories and transmitted them with embellishments. The middle classes, burdened by taxes, high prices and losses accruing from the late eruption, were ready to accept anything prejudicial to the Government. Jealous fears that Prince Caramanico had re-established old relations with the Queen were considered sufficient motive for the crime. The Prime Minister's fall was confidently predicted, but opinion was divided as to his successor. Small tradesmen named Don Luigi di Medici because they wished it; the Jacobins, who had cause to hate the *Regente di Vicaria*, declared that the old régime would soon be swept away and replaced by a Republic.

The strong undercurrent of dissatisfaction made no mark upon the surface. Carnival was observed with the customary balls, dinners and gala performances at the opera. Sir William celebrated the Queen of England's birthday with a dinner of seventy-four covers followed by a *bal masqué*; Emma sang the national anthem and opened the ball with Prince Augustus. The room was gay with garlands and in-

scriptions in transparence extolling Her Majesty; all the English ladies had *God Save the Queen* on bandeaux and sashes. On the drive back to Caserta Emma caught a chill and became dangerously ill. Maria Carolina, expressing grave concern, supplemented the doctor's treatment with powders from her own medicine closet. Despite so much attention Emma's convalescence was slow and for a month she was a prisoner in her room.

"Seeing you're short of money, gal, I should spend the time re-titivating your gownds," advised Mrs. Cadogan. "You have enough old ones put away to save buying for a year; if you combine a bit of one with a bit of another they'll never be recognized. You can always count on people being a vast sight less noticing than they think themselves."

Attendance at court had doubled the demands on Emma's wardrobe, yet her allowance was no larger than sufficed for Mrs. Hart. Expenses at home had also increased; in addition to Dame Kidd's Christmas present, money had been supplied to Sarah Connor to start a lodging-house at Parkgate. Michael Connor's recent death in Chester madhouse had freed his widow to rise in the world.

Emma pursued her own thoughts. "I wish I could get a length of fine muslin or leno, and some ribbons from England. I wrote twice asking Greville to send some by the Courier, and to put them down to Sir Will'um's bank account, but he doesn't answer. And I wanted him to plan how I could situate poor little Emma, but he takes no notice of that either."

"You should have more pride, Emy, than to ask favours of a man who has treated you so shameful!"

"There's no reason why I should put him right out of my mind!"

"You won't anyway—'tis not in female nature. When I was a gal there was a young collie bitch at Owen's farm, and her first fancy was a plum-pudding dog that belonged to Mr. John Boydell, visiting at the Manor House. Now mark this, Emma! Every puppy in the litter was a true plum-pudding dog; but, stranger still, though she never set eyes on that dog again and mated as respectable as possible with the old collie from the 'Plough', each time she whelped the puppies were white with black spots!"

"Tisn't surprising that the King calls you 'old *ruffiana*' and likes your tales, for I declare they are vulgar enough though they have no point!"

Mrs. Cadogan continued imperturbably. "A female gives her heart

but once; a dozen lovers may follow, but all are overshadowed by the first."

A few days later Sir William received four folio pages from Greville, but there was no message to Emma unless it was this:

"You mentioned some time ago that the young protégé of Ly. Hamilton should meet your assistance on proper occasion. I told you then I wished you to consult Ly. H. as to what she advised, and that she was too young to be put to anything. Blackburn brought me an account of £29 for her board, &c., which I shall, as before, desire Ross and Ogilvie to pay."

Emma surprised herself by beginning to cry. "My love, what's amiss?" cried Sir William in boisterous surprise. "I thought ye'd be delighted to read of the respect Charles already commands in his important office."

Emma looked up, an exquisite picture of contrition. "Forgive me, but I'm still weak—anything makes me cry."

Queen Carolina was Emma's first visitor; she arrived in great agitation, and looked far worse than the invalid. "My dear Miledi, I come at a most critical moment to inquire after your dear health, and am therefore less tranquil than I could wish. Indeed I should have stayed away and not troubled you, but I am nearly distracted, I have no one I can trust." She looked on the point of breaking down, but with a great effort controlled herself.

In a moment Emma was kneeling on the floor, clasping the hands that twisted and tore a fragile lace handkerchief. "Tell me what is the matter," she cried. "Maybe I can help—I was never one to shrink from danger."

"I know your heart, and your courage I do not doubt—all the English are brave and honourable. Alas! Integrity is not a quality that prevails in this country. For many years I trusted all who professed themselves worthy, I gave practical aid to those who planned reforms, and made it possible for poor philosophers to write noble books on social betterment; as a result I am the most hated woman in the kingdom!"

"Oh, you are not, you are not! Hundreds of the poor, and the nobles too, know what you have done and feel grateful."

"Among the poor I have some friends, but among the nobility only enemies. Should the French occupy Leghorn and other parts of Tuscany, the threat to this kingdom would be welcomed, the more readily because I am the resolute opponent of the Republic."

"But the King has done everything possible—think how generously he supplies our fleet with anything needed. He even robbed a Neapolitan frigate of her masts so that an English one might return to her station."

"Yes, yes, much has been done!" The Queen's inflamed eyes looked across the park to the palace gleaming against rising woodlands. Now and again a shot rang out and a puff of smoke rose lazily into the soft air; His Majesty was hunting foxes with a select party, which included his friend the British Envoy.

"The King does not seem so fond of the *chasse* as he used to be; 'tis the first year since I came to Naples that he has not hunted at Persano or Venasso," said Emma, attempting to introduce a happier theme.

"We haven't the money, consequently His Majesty has time for affairs of State—this causes me great uneasiness. Letters constantly arrive from Madrid *which are not shown to me*, and they are in cipher, incomprehensible without the key which His Majesty jealously guards. I await a moment of forgetfulness." A jewel on her pretty hand arrested the Queen's attention; as she admired it she asked: "Shall I send you a key to the cipher when I obtain it, Miledi?"

"To me? What should I do with it, Ma'am?"

"If Spain is intriguing with France for a separate peace, England should know of it. Though His Majesty keeps the cipher securely, he is less careful of the letters themselves, and it will not be difficult for me to borrow them for a few hours. If they seem of interest to the British Government—well!" she shrugged her shoulders. "Doubtless the Chevalier will know how to proceed!"

Emma's eyes sparkled. "There would be risk in it?"

"More than enough," the Queen dryly answered; "but you will never be suspected, because all remark on your candour and sincerity."

"Mine would be the danger and the glory! Oh, Ma'am, I thank you—and I'll not fail in discretion or courage."

"Whatever happens *I must not be compromised in any way at all*. I am already hated by Spain, which would be capable of any atrocity against me. I fear them little and estimate them less, but in my home and private life they can make trouble." Leaning heavily on an ivory-and-gold stick, Carolina rose, laughing ruefully as she did so. "*Chère amie*, from your radiant face one would imagine I had given you a magnificent gift instead of involving you in Court intrigues. To-

morrow you will hear of yet another conspiracy; take warning from it *not to be discovered!*"

On the last day of February Sir William had business in town, and Emma accompanied him. After passing between the twin towers of *L'Onore* and *La Virtù* the carriage was held up by crowds of wretched-looking people packed tightly outside the gate of the Vicaria.

"Sir Will'um, we always forget that Saturday is the *Lotto*," said Emma, poking her head out of the window. "Look! There's a guard of *Sbirri* holding back the crowd—they must expect more prisoners."

The weekly lottery was drawn in the old hall of the tribunals under the supervision of four judges, two priests and the Minister of Police, dressed in a black gown. In honour of the occasion the heavy arched gateway was decorated with plaster busts of the King and Queen and festoons of red and white calico bespangled with discs of gold paper.

From their elevation Emma and Sir William could see over the heads of the people into the courtyard that was surrounded by the grim walls of the prison. Haggard young faces peered through heavy grilles; sometimes a dirty aristocratic hand closed on an iron bar in an attempt to shake it loose.

"'Tis rumoured that Annibale Giordano is in the dungeon; if so, the Regent must find it painful to keep a former friend in such a cruel situation."

A coach rumbled from the shelter of Covella's tower and crossed the courtyard to the main gate. *Sbirri* forced the crowd to give way; as the vehicle passed, Emma recognized Don Luigi di Medici seated beside one of the Swiss officers from Sant' Elmo. Sir William turned sharply. "Did ye notice anything unusual about the Regent?"

"He looked pale and half famished—but he always does."

"My dear, he looked like a man sentenced to death; and well he might, for his hands were manacled."

"Good God. That must be what the Queen meant yesterday, when she said we should hear of yet another conspiracy. Is nobody to be trusted?"

The street was emptying into the courtyard; poverty-stricken gamblers fought towards the door of the great hall. An *Assistito* in his cabalistic robe shouted, by way of advertisement, lottery tips and their symbols: "*Cinque, Ventidue*—'the madman!' *Quindici, Quaranta otto*—'the dead man that speaks!'"

Emma spent the morning studying with her masters; Sir William

rejoined her for dinner. "My dear, we certainly passed Castel Capuano at an interesting moment. The Regent of the Vicaria was arrested last night, suspected of conspiring to overthrow the Queen and General Acton. We saw him on his way to imprisonment in the castle of Gaëta."

"The ungrateful wretch! Think what has been done for him and his family—no one has been more distinguished at Court than Luigi di Medici."

"Personally, I never liked him; he is a man of abilities and aspiring character, but haughty and high-handed to an intolerable degree."

"What is being done beside clapping Don Luigi into a fortress?"

"Apparently General Acton has known of the conspiracy for some time; several other arrests have been made, among them the hunch-backed Franciscano who used to preach of hell fire outside San Carlino. Acton apprehends no danger of revolution if the Government acts firmly and preserves good humour among the *lazzaroni* by keeping down the price of bread."

Emma and Sir William remained overnight at Palazzo Sessa. In the morning General Acton drove with them to Caserta, keeping his petulant mood well spiced with pinches of rappee. Beside him lay a sack of plum-coloured cloth, once a driving-coat, but now a receptacle for documents.

"The news circulating amongst the Jacobins of the French fleet being at sea has greatly flattered their opinion of themselves," he remarked; "it promotes bold acts that they would not be guilty of without borrowed bravery."

"*A propos*. I've just received a letter from Captain Nelson warning us against sanguine hopes that a victory at sea will save Italy in the present situation. If the Austrians are not ready to attack, transports could land troops at Porto Specia while a naval battle was in progress. Given sufficient ships this could be avoided. Captain Nelson complains that the Spanish are withholding four Sail of the Line. Could not you prevail on His Sicilian Majesty to release a part of the Neapolitan fleet to join Admiral Hotham?"

"No!" the Prime Minister responded curtly; "we've spared the Cavaliere Caracciolo in the *Tancredi*, and that's all we can do without leaving our coast unprotected and Naples at the mercy of Jacobins and French invasion. I will not take responsibility for governing unless the fleet is in the bay. I'd rather retire to my Shropshire estate."

At Caserta all was confusion. Common soldiers from the garrison

at Gaëta replaced the red-and-green-uniformed guards; the royal family changed their apartments, and, as a precaution against poison, the palace cooks were summarily dismissed.

"You'd hardly disappeared yesterday morning when Her Majesty and the Princesses came asking if they could spend the day as Sir Will'um's guests," Mrs. Cadogan recounted. "Royalty are a sad sight in adversity, being incapable of fending for themselves. I put the Queen to lie on your bed, and the children I took with me to the kitchens to have them taught to peel potatoes. Lord! It was a pleasure to see how they enjoyed themselves. Then Princess Therèse and me we made a hot-pot for dinner, and the Queen said it was the best dish she'd ever tasted."

"How long did they stay?"

"Till ten, English time—after the new guards arrived and the kitchen staff from the Palace of Portici."

Queen Carolina's fortitude, which had withstood the strain of repeated political conspiracies, was vanquished by the personal nature of the latest plot. Evidence revealed that Don Luigi's machinations were directed exclusively against herself and the Prime Minister. The bitterness of the discovery brought on an attack of ague and drove her to bed.

Emma, a frequent visitor to the sick room, had the satisfaction of imparting the only good news to reach Naples since New Year. Falling on her knees beside the massive golden bed, she made a roguish, tantalizing face. I'll give you three guesses to name something wonderful that's happened."

"The French fleet is sunk," Maria Carolina promptly responded.

"Tis not quite so splendid as that," Emma acknowledged, "but the news is as fine as one could ask. On March 13th, Admiral Hotham met the French on their way to recapture Corsica, but the enemy forgot their orders when they saw our ships and were reluctant to fight. All our officers were brave, but Captain Nelson covered himself with glory. Though the *Agamemnon* is only a 64 he closed with *Le Ça-Ira*, of 80 guns, and kept up the battle till she struck. The officer who brought Sir Will'um the news says the French ship was large enough to take the *Agamemnon* into her hold, and 'twas like watching a little dog attacking a big one. *Le Ça-Ira* lost a hundred and ten killed. Captain Nelson had only seven wounded, but his sails are in ribbons and his ropes are all ends."

"Praise be to God," Her Majesty devoutly breathed. "At last a

stand is being made against that nation of murderers. May heaven bless and reward Captain Nelson as his great virtues deserve. But what of the *Tancredi*? How did Francesco Caracciolo comport himself? "

"He was brave as any," cried Emma, concealing her ignorance by invention; "each officer and man crowned himself with honour."

The Allied success at sea was nullified by continued unrest in the Kingdom. Prince Castalcicala, Neapolitan Ambassador to St. James's, was recalled to preside over the trial of Don Luigi di Medici, and the Marchese di Gallo, Ambassador at Vienna, was expected to be the new Secretary of State.

"General Acton insists on resigning all his employments," Sir William announced after an official visit to the palace. "His irritable constitution, coupled with the fatigue of administering three important offices, renders him unable to take a philosophical view of the cabals excited against him."

"Sir John hasn't been right since reading Joseph Gorani's infamous *Mémoires* that accuse him of being the Queen's lover."

"I suspected him formerly, but I'm now convinced that an occasional embrace from his good, fat wife satisfies every amatory instinct."

Just before Easter the danger point shifted from Naples to Palermo. A plot to murder the nobility, rob the banks and set up an independent republic was discovered in time for the Government to act. Three hundred conspirators were immediately imprisoned and the ringleaders executed without trial.

Maria Carolina discussed the affair with Emma as they sat sewing in an arbour close to the cascades. The Queen's voice, though clear and decisive, had a sorrowful ring that harmonized with the splash of falling water.

"Sir John Acton's firmness in this matter will do good; rebels are cowards at heart, they plot only so long as they picture death for others. When death comes to them we see a difference. If treachery within the kingdom was the only danger, I should be tranquil."

"Do you still think, Ma'am, that Spain is treating for a separate peace with the enemy? "

"My dear friend, I know nothing, but I question—everything."

In a few days Maria Carolina's suspicions of Spanish treachery were confirmed by a secret dispatch from the Marchese Galatone, Prince di

Belmonte Pignatelli, Neapolitan Minister at the Port of Spain. Employing Emma as a trusty agent, the Queen hastened to inform Sir William.

“Dear Miledi,

Another courier from Spain of the 28th—Bilbao has capitulated, all Biscaye is with the French; but the Court, the Ministry is tranquil. Alcudia said to our Minister ‘that this loss was only for a little while and that soon one would see all change for the better.’—This is incomprehensible. The French General Moncey pays compliments to Spanish couriers, gives them passports, compliments. Saint Simon has been sent to look after Pancorvo, to enter Castille. I am at a loss what to think of all that. A person is decyphering the cypher. If I know anything more you shall know it. But this turn of affairs is inconceivable. Adieu, a thousand compliments to the Chevalier. Wholly yours for life

Charlotte.”

Emma could not impart this letter until evening. As the sun sank in a blaze of gold that sent rosy ripples across the turquoise sky she set out on foot to meet Sir William returning from Naples. Her rapid steps kept pace with exuberant pictures of Emma Hamilton as the saviour of England and the Two Sicilies. Scene followed scene with the facile smoothness of a dream. Disguised as a British midshipman, she saw herself conveying to Vice-Admiral Hotham secret intelligence of a concerted Franco-Spanish plot to attack the British fleet. After being thanked by the Admiral on the quarter-deck she whipped off her white wig and shook out her golden hair. “I am no midshipman,” she cried in ringing tones, “but Emma, Lady Hamilton, who, through friendship with the gracious Queen of Naples, has been enabled to save the fleet of Britain and the shores of the Sicilian realm.” “My preserver!” said the Admiral, dropping on one knee to kiss her hand. “Huzzal huzzal huzzal!” shouted the gratified seamen.

Emma lingered over the spectacle of herself, a graceful figure in Sir William’s embroidered ball dress of cut velvet, which magically replaced a midshipman’s uniform just as she descended the rope ladder into the arms of Captain Nelson, who waited in a boat to receive her.

Engrossed in this agreeable vision, she failed to notice that daylight had faded into azure dusk and that her steps had carried her far along

the carriage-road to Naples. The eager whinny of a stallion in a field recalled Emma to reality. Gradually the sky became luminous as the moon lifted itself above Monte Somma and floated up into the sky. It revealed a wisp of smoke from Vesuvius and arid wastes of lava running down into black shadows of vineyards that in turn gave place to an undulating plain checkered with low stone walls. As the moon mounted, so the landscape gained in blanched significance. A broken colonnade in the middle of a barley field gleamed in the flood of eerie light; the foliage of a stone-pine made a dark island in the sky; above the arch of a well an oleander, frail as a *coryphée*, spread scented flowers.

Emma forgot her dreams in sudden and unreasonable anxiety. Supposing some mischance had overtaken Sir Will'um. . . . Sure, the town was full of dangers and no one was safe from hour to hour. She listened for the sound of wheels, but only the lonely call of a night bird reached her expectant ears.

Driven by intangible foreboding, she began to run towards Naples. After half a mile she was obliged to halt, and found herself overshadowed by the plinth of the *purgatorio* at the cross road to Marcianire. The anguished eyes of the effigy, whose shoulders and bosom uprose from hungry flames, seemed to fix her with a baleful glare. Emma stared back defiantly. "There's no use looking at me like that, for I'm not one to be frightened by an image," she taunted. As she spoke she heard hoofs clacking in the distance and presently discerned winking yellow lights far down the road.

The coachman and footman, taking Emma for a ghost, called on the Madonna and clung to each other. Sir William, bent double by cruel pains in his belly, cared not if saint or devil had come to fetch him.

Climbing into the stuffy coach, Emma was startled to find her husband on the floor. "Sir Will'um, whatever are you doing?"

"Dying, my dear."

As she could not induce him to adopt another position she sat down and steadied him against her knees. "You should have called Dr. Nudi and stayed in town," she said in a voice querulous with anxiety.

The journey seemed interminable. At the villa Sir William had to be lifted from the coach and carried upstairs. While Emma stood in the hall holding aloft a candelabrum, her mind pursued an elusive memory. It was not the first time she had watched a pair of foot-

men carrying their master to bed. But who could it have been? . . . Certainly not Greville, who'd only wenches to serve him.

Bit by bit a scene returned from limbo. There were the oak stairs at Uppark guarded on the left by a heavy balustrade and on the right by a panelled wall, a background for Arthur Devis's paintings of sedate children in ice-blue satin. There, too, was Sir Harry, brought home with the gout from Arundel Castle. The vision was so real that Emma recoiled. Was it a bad omen? . . . Did it mean that Sir Will'um would die? . . . Oh, God, suppose the future was to be like the past. . . . Perhaps life was a spiral, winding in the same pattern through the years. . . .

"Sir Will'um! Sir Will'um! Don't leave me!" she cried in panic as she dropped the candlestick and posted up the marble steps.

For two days there was doubt whether the British Minister had the smallpox or a recurrence of his old complaint—a bilious fever. Dr. Nudi sent his assistant to stay at the villa; the Queen wrote four and sometimes five times a day, and even offered to act as nurse.

On April the 19th the invalid's progress was sufficiently satisfactory for Emma to report to Greville:

"Poor Sir William has been in bed 8 days of a billious fever, and was better, but wou'd get up yesterday, which has thrown him back, and to-day he is not so well. But the doctor, who is in the house with me, says there is no danger. . . .

Send me some news, political and private; for, against my will, *owing to my situation here*, I am got into politicks, and I wish to have news for our dear much-loved Queen, whom I adore. Nor can I live without her, for she is to me a mother, friend and everything. If you cou'd know her as I do, how you wou'd adore her! For she is the first woman in the world; her talents are superior to every woman's in the world; and her heart is most excellent and strictly good and upright. But you'll say it is because we are such friends, that I am partial; but ask everybody that knows her. She loves England and is attached to our Ministry, and wishes the continuation of the war as the only means to ruin that abominable French council."

Emma hoped Sir William would be up for her birthday on the 26th, but when Sunday came the doctor would not consent. Presents from the Palace arrived after Mass. The King sent a paste of Apollo; the Queen a pincushion in a gold case, and Princess Marie-Amelie a life of Santa Teresa inscribed: *Pour ma chère Miledi par 'La Santa'.*

"That devout child hopes to make a Papist of ye, my lovely pagan!" said Sir William, pinching Emma's cheek.

"*La Santa* is the prettiest of all the princesses, so 'tis a shame she thinks of naught but holiness."

Two days later the invalid came downstairs for dinner at three o'clock. He was still feeble, and professed no appetite for a bowl of ass's milk placed before him. "It is fortunate we are momentarily free from alarms, for I am so exceedingly weak I should be unable to write long dispatches."

In the afternoon he walked the length of the terrace, leaning heavily on Emma's arm. They saw, approaching from the forecourt, the Queen's steward, who hesitated to meet them until Sir William genially cried out: "Come on, Saverio, come on! But I hope ye don't bring ill news, for I have just been telling her Ladyship that I lack strength to cope with it."

"A letter, Eccellenza, for Miledi: Her Majesty bids me return for an answer before twenty-four of the clock."

"It will be ready. Is the King at Canditello?"

"We expect His Majesty from Naples at one hour of the night, Eccellenza."

When Saverio left them Emma split open the packet, and found a deciphered dispatch from the Marquis Galatone and a note which read thus:

"My very dear Miledi,

My head is so confused and soul so shaken that I know not what to do. I hope to see you to-morrow morning towards ten o'clock. I send you a letter in cipher from Spain from Galatone, which you must return before twenty-four hours so that the King may find it again. There are some very interesting facts for the English government, which I am delighted to communicate to them, to show my attachment to them and my confidence in the worthy Chevalier, whom I only beg not to compromise me. Villars has at Genoa shown publicly, and especially to Ignasia Serra, Capano's brother, a full power to make peace with all the Italian powers who wish it, and especially with the Two Sicilies. That shows their need. Adieu! How many things we shall speak of to-morrow. Adieu!

Meanwhile Sir William possessed himself of the voluminous dispatch, then glanced at his watch. "It is now half-past five by English Log-time, and the sun sets about seven: that allows me two hours

and a half to take a copy of this very important document. I fear the present weak state of my head will render the task impossible. The most I can accomplish is a hasty sketch of the principal points."

"Couldn't I do it, Sir Will'um?"

"If Lord Grenville got the idea I was too feeble to write my own dispatches he would quickly replace me by a younger man, and we know full well that many are impatient to step into my shoes."

Binding his head with a wet towel, Sir William strove to compress Prince Belmonte's wordy communication of March 31st into a *précis-verbal*. As he transcribed he read extracts aloud:

"In the conference held the day before yesterday the Duke of Alcudia said to the Prussian Minister that he thought preferable to suspend for the present the immediate mission, already agreed upon between them, of a secret agent of this Court to *Switzerland*. . . . On this occasion not only did Alcudia confirm in his conversation with the Prussian Minister the peaceful intentions of Spain, but he used such expressions as to let one infer or suspect with good reason that his Government had already opened secret preliminary negotiations with the French to that effect. . . . Two weeks ago the Minister of Marine ordered Chevalier Malaspina to prepare immediately, and with the greatest secrecy, a plan of defence of the Philippine Islands. This officer of marine asked the Minister whether this plan of defence was to serve against the French or against the English. . . . The Minister replied that he should prepare it for a war against the English, and Malaspina, in drawing it, has appended to it all the necessary instructions for the Spanish commander of the Philippine Islands . . . the above mentioned plan has been immediately sent by express to Cadiz."

Pausing to fold a wide margin in a fresh sheet of paper, Sir William displayed unusual excitement. "This dispatch is of extraordinary importance, but the time is too short to do anything with it. When you see the Queen to-morrow, Emma, you must beg another copy to send immediately to Lord Grenville. Impress upon her the urgency of the matter; in the interim I shall transmit these notes in our own cipher."

"Our Government ought to be very grateful to us, for they could never get this secret information in the ordinary way."

"We certainly occupy a most extraordinary position at this Court, and you in particular are performing valuable service for our country."

On the following morning, as a clock struck sixteen, Emma walked along the portico that pierced the palace and mounted the central staircase to the Queen's apartments overlooking the grand cascade.

Standing with her back to the room, Maria Carolina watched Ferdinando splashing among the fountains and statues to give live frogs to his trout that basked in the pools. When Emma touched the Queen's arm she cried out and sprang away. Panting, and with her hand on her heart, she smiled apologetically. "Forgive me, my dear friend, but my nerves are broken by constant threats to our lives. But let us not speak of that; tell me instead of the worthy Chevalier—is he better? Did he think the paper I sent him yesterday would be useful to England?"

"Indeed, Ma'am, he was more excited over it than I have ever seen, for, as you know, Sir Will'um prides himself on being a philosopher."

"My friendship and good faith require me to expose what is being plotted; whatever others may think, I play an honest part, and I desire the Chevalier to see everything, provided I am not mentioned in London or named here."

"All must count you brave and noble."

"Miledi, if it became known that I gave secret information against Spain, I should be hated even more than I am, for there are many Neapolitans who still feel allegiance to his Catholic Majesty." As she talked, the Queen's eyes were not upon Emma, but followed Ferdinando wading in the deep pools between the cascades. "My husband had a letter yesterday from his brother confirming all that Galatone reports. The King of Spain says: 'I seriously consider giving peace to my subjects and putting an end to the effusion of blood, and would readily join and assist any Italian Powers in order to bring about such a desired object'."

"Throughout, the Spanish have been but half-hearted allies," Emma responded. "And I'm sure we return the compliment by feeling no love for the Dons."

"But do they intend peace? I look for what lies behind, remembering that Spain resents British incursion into the Mediterranean."

Emma remained with Maria Carolina until Ferdinando showed signs of returning to the palace; by that time Emma was repossessed of the Marquis Galatone's dispatch and had the promise of a key to the Spanish cipher. "The English Court may count on us," said the Queen; "the King's good faith and loyalty equals mine, and he realizes the present and future advantages of alliance with the English

Court; he esteems, loves, cherishes and trusts your brave nation and the Cabinet," declared the Queen in fervent crescendo. "*Nothing, nothing* will make him vary his feelings!"

That evening Emma received a transcription of Prince Belmonte's dispatch and a copy of the Spanish cipher. "Lord Grenville must have these papers as soon as possible, but a special courier might arouse suspicion," said Sir William. "Gaetano shall take the packet to Rome, and I will direct Mr. Jenkins, the Banker, to send it thence with the utmost secrecy."

"What if it falls into the hands of the French?"

"The risk must be taken."

Gaetano left in the early dawn; out of livery he looked like a respectable young peasant prosperous enough to ride a horse of his own. After the thud of hoofs had died in the distance, Sir William's head drooped between the candles guttering on his desk. "I'm truly thankful I had strength to write so much. At last I feel my sixty-five years, Emma, and the excesses of my younger days."

On hearing that thinner and purer air was prescribed, General Acton offered Sir William his villa on the slope of Sant' Elmo. Built in a cleft of the hill below the convent of San Martino, Casino Merala possessed a view scarcely inferior to that enjoyed by the monks. A narrow terrace cut in the face of the rock commanded a dizzy panorama of the bay. From a new angle the familiar scene appeared strange. Vesuvius, from being the most important feature of the eastern landscape, became subservient to the purple peaks of the Apennines, and Ponte Posilipo, which from a lower level commanded the western prospect, lost prestige to blue capes and shadowy mountains across the Bay of Baia.

Through his telescope Sir William watched new houses arising on the lava that covered Torre del Greco; as the hot ashes were disturbed, smoke obscured his view. "The people's stubborn refusal to abandon the old site relieves His Majesty of the expense of reconstruction—a matter of no small consequence in the straitened condition of the exchequer."

"But things have improved since the private banks were abolished," said Emma; "now there is never any difficulty in getting cash for bills, and all seems to work as smooth as possible."

"I, personally, have nothing but praise for the National Bank, but private individuals who kept large deposits in the *caisses de credit* lost thirty-five millions of ducats in the forced amalgamation, and

resultant hardships have played their part in fermenting antagonism to the Crown."

"At the last Court I overheard Luisa Sanfelice saying to Prince San Cataldo: 'Look how the Queen glitters; yet she pretends her jewels are pawned or sold for the defence and peace of the Kingdom! Their Majesties' hypocritical talk of poverty and ostentatious display of generosity enable them to prosecute an infamous traffic with our substance. I had ten thousand ducats in the Popolo.' 'And I,' said the Prince, 'had a bank bill for seven thousand on the Pieta.'"

"There's no doubt the King and Queen are blamed for repudiating the debts of the private bankers, and much capital is made of it by the Jacobin Party."

Casino Merala was sufficiently close to Caserta for letters to be carried by groom from the Queen to Emma, and Sir William was kept informed of events. Reports were followed by counter-reports. General Acton, calling to acquaint the British Minister of his decision to remain at the head of the government, announced that Spain had actually signed a treaty of peace with the French Republic. "But your Cabinet may rest assured that the Two Sicilies will adhere inviolably to their pact with Great Britain," he said as he rose to depart.

Louis XVII's death in the Temple jarred those who studiously forgot the Reign of Terror. When the news reached Naples, persons whose sympathies were suspect were the first to condole. Innumerable carriages proceeded to Caserta bearing large memorial wreaths made of beads, wire and gauze; Sir William and Emma sent rosemary and white lilies as a better tribute to youth and purity.

The royal family returned to the capital at the end of June, driven thither by the virulence of marsh fever. Naples basked in apparent serenity beneath the blazing sun. There was abundance of bread and oil for the poor, and iced water could be had for the asking. Not a week passed without a *festa*—holy spectacles that satisfied both the sight and the soul.

"*Festa, forza e farina*," said the King in the treble key that denoted his pleasure. "My people are easy to govern if they're given what is good for them."

Towards the nobility a different policy was pursued. The *giunta* worked stealthily; suspected Jacobins were carried off in the middle of the night to State prisons, depositions were taken in secret and the least murmur against the system of denunciation rendered a person suspect and liable to arrest. Prisoners were daily brought in from

the provinces; marching between armed guards, they provided spectacles to rival the processions of penitent prostitutes and funereal cavalcades of noble, richly garbed corpses.

The treaty that had occasioned so many rumours was signed by representatives of France and Spain at Basle on the 23rd of July; a fortnight later the Court of Naples received official intimation of the peace. The news was transmitted to the British Minister during a card-party at Palazzo Reale. King Ferdinando, who made the announcement, assumed a casual air that did not hide uneasiness. "Reports of Spain having followed the example of the King of Prussia are proved true; a peace has been signed at Basle, but of course it will not affect this kingdom."

The family connection between the Neapolitan Court and Madrid prevented comment, and Sir William tactfully added up his losses at *swicken*.

In a *tête-à-tête* with Emma the Queen was less reticent. "This defection is but the beginning," she said in great agitation; "from the day I came to Italy I never trusted the policy of Spain. Though supposedly a separate kingdom, the Sicilies was regarded by Madrid as a vassal state, subservient alike to King Carlos and His Holiness the Pope. We were dependent for protection upon my father-in-law; our Government was in the hands of his Minister, the Marchese Tanucci; my husband was content to rule under the direction of others—to be the mock head of a puppet monarchy. *I was not!* It took a long time to convince the King that we ought to be free to make our own decisions, and, being free, were under an obligation to ensure our own defence. Happily for me, I had support from my brother, the late Grand Duke of Tuscany; he sent us General Acton, who, as you know, has built up our marine and our army to a strength comparable with any Italian State. Now it seems, my husband's brother claims the right of domination which I refused to his father; Carlos IV is 'ready to obtain the benefits of peace' for us!"

With trembling hands the Queen unlocked a casket and took from it a packet which she unfolded. "This letter, dated the 11th August, is from the King of Spain to my husband. I read only the end, as you may copy the whole for the Chevalier. Listen:

'Whatever may be the result of the negotiation on foot, you may rest assured that I shall never be forgetful of Italy, and far less of your own states, and that you will always find me ready to obtain for you

the same benefit of the peace which I so much desire, proportionate to my own. As to which object, I have already made some proposals in your behalf, which I apprehend will be well received. God send that it may be for us a means more to the purpose of sparing the blood of the rest of our ill-fated family than war has hitherto been. . . .”

“What does His Majesty say?” cried Emma. “Sure the King of Spain takes a great deal on himself to sue for peace on behalf of another.”

“It is so infamous and absurd that it revolts me even to speak of it. Spain does not ask for the approval of Naples, to whose orders and instructions any negotiation with Republican France is diametrically opposed. The whole underhand scheming for a separate peace shows the villainy of Alcudia and Queen Maria Luisa and the cowardice and stupidity of King Carlos.”

“I can understand that the French occupation of Guipuzcoa and threats of attack in Biscay might frighten the Duke of Alcudia into a craving for peace, but for the Sicilies to give way can’t advantage him.”

“Ah, my dear friend, you have not been brought up in the intrigues of Courts! This is but the first step in a plan to restore the Sicilies to the Spanish Crown. Maria Luisa wants the throne for her daughter’s bridegroom, Louis, the Duke of Parma’s son. The peace with France is but the prelude to an alliance, and must lead to war between England and Spain. Deprived of British protection, the Spanish Queen knows we should be unable to defend ourselves against the Republic; probably our Kingdom is the price stipulated for signing the treaty of Basle.”

“Ma’am, you must build more ships than the enemy, and train an army large enough to hold the French.”

“*Mon Dieu!* I would fight until I was the last able to hold a sword—but one cannot conquer when half the nation is treacherous!”

While Emma copied King Carlos’ letter, the Queen was on tenterhooks lest her husband returned and missed it from his pocket. “Can’t you be quicker?” she cried.

“I can’t go so fast in Italian as in English, and I must write so Sir Will’um can read it. Sure he complains enough about my untidy scrawl as ’tis.”

Emma executed her task so neatly that it brought her nothing but praise from her husband. “My dear, when the circumstances become

known, ye will be accorded due credit for the important part ye have played during this very critical juncture."

"Do you think Queen Charlotte will receive me when we go home?"

"I fully expect your services to be acknowledged by all."

Maria Carolina sustained another severe shock before 1795 drearily languished to its end. The Austrians, on whom she pinned her hopes, were defeated at Loano. Thanks to protection afforded by the *Agamemnon*, General de Vins and many thousand men escaped by the coastal road of the Bocchetta, but the defeat resulted in the enemy capturing Vado and the riviera of Genoa, recovered in the spring campaign. As soon as the Austrian General regained composure he blamed Vice-Admiral Sir Hyde Parker for the *débâcle*.

"And I believe there are grounds for complaint," Sir William remarked. "Commodore Nelson asked for two 74-gun ships and eight or ten frigates and sloops to ensure the safety of the army; instead Admiral Hyde Parker reduced his forces to one frigate and a brig, which, being blown off the coast, left the *Agamemnon* with the whole onus of supporting the Austrians."

"A ship commanded by Captain Nelson would be as valuable as a squadron under the orders of an ordinary sea officer," said Emma.

"My love, ye must remember he is now a Commodore," Sir William admonished. "But even Nelson cannot be in two places at once, nor could his support compensate for lack of courage and discipline in the Imperial Army. The battle followed a course with which we have become only too familiar. The Austrians did not stand firm, and the French were determined to conquer or die."

"'Twill break the Queen's heart. Who can she depend on to save Italy if the Austrians fail?"

"Her Majesty will persuade herself that, given different leadership, the Emperor's forces must triumph."

"Do you think Commodore Nelson will come to Naples soon?"

"I doubt if we'll see him again. Sir John Jervis is arrived as Commander-in-Chief, and he will probably order the *Agamemnon* home. After her long and gruelling service she can be little better than a wreck."

Emma said no more, but looked out at the rain slanting from a colourless sky. Vesuvius and the bay were obscured, Castel dell' Uovo emerged grey and shiny as a sea monster from the spume of fretting waves. Inside the shoal of Santa Lucia, fishing-boats, half full

of water, tossed and bumped against each other. Every house in view was closely shuttered; patches of damp discoloured mock brickwork painted in ox-blood on plaster walls; brown stains trickled down from iron balconies; here and there a sodden awning gave added desolation to buildings that looked flat and unsubstantial as façades on a backcloth at Sadler's Wells.

"In my long tenure at Naples I have met nearly every one of our sea officers," said Sir William in conversational tones, "but it is noteworthy that duty rarely brings an officer here a second time."

His voice blended with the swish of rain and the sad music of *zampognari* playing their Christmas *lamento* before the shrine in Vico Santa Maria.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE spring of 1796 was disastrous for Italy. The Dukes of Parma and Modena secured peace for their Duchies by paying large indemnities; the King of Sardinia accepted final defeat for his arms at Mondovì and, on the 15th of May, ceded Savoy and Nice to France. Five days earlier the Austrians, under General Beaulieu, had been totally defeated by Napoleon Buonaparte at Lodi. Four Neapolitan regiments of cavalry were involved in the *débâcle*, but on the 29th their valour on the banks of the Mincio in Lombardy made possible a retreat of the Imperial forces into the defiles of the Tyrol. The withdrawal left Italy open to incursions by French marauders. The Pope, whose State was in immediate danger, translated alarm into action by authorizing the Spanish Minister at Rome to offer General Buonaparte ten millions of crowns to respect the frontier.

In Naples the nobility of the highest rank loudly proclaimed that nothing could be done but treat with the French Directory and submit to the best terms procurable, an opinion quickly countered by a royal letter addressed to the Bishops and prelates and a manifesto calling upon loyal subjects to defend the Kingdom. When it became known that the King intended to head three thousand regular troops ordered to occupy strong posts on the confines of the Papal State, public sentiment underwent a transformation. In a few hours thousands of young men flocked to the Royal Standard erected in the middle of Largo del Palazzo Reale; offers of money, plate, and horses were tended by older patriots. The Cardinal Archbishop ordered that three days should be spent in fasting and prayer; amid scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm the King and the royal family drove to the cathedral publicly to solicit San Gennaro's protection for the Sicilies.

In private King Ferdinando was equally brave and resolute. "I would rather die at the head of my army than submit to an ignominious peace," he informed Sir William. "When you write your Tuesday

dispatch, tell your Government they can rely on me and my good faith. And are the French soldiers so formidable? Everyone agrees that the Austrians ran away from a horde of half-naked youths inspired by brandy and opium. When I meet General Buonaparte he will be opposed not by Austrians, but by brave Neapolitans who know how to fight. Will you say that to Milord Grenville?"

The British Minister watched the King adjusting the slings of a long sword that trailed on the ground. "In appropriate words, I shall feel pleasure in communicating your gracious sentiments," Sir William suavely rejoined.

The collapse of Maria Carolina's cherished hopes laid a double burden upon Emma; she had to sympathize and she had to listen. Fear of being overheard caused the Queen to lower her voice to a whisper; this obliged Emma to lean forward, a stretch in muscle and mind to catch the mournful monologue. "We are caught in a vicious circle: each government works independently for individual safety instead of combining forces to keep Italy from invasion. When my son-in-law insisted on making a separate peace for Tuscany he created a dangerous precedent which has been followed first by Spain, then by the Sardinians and now by Rome. The Pope and the Grand Duke seek safety in neutrality, depending on the English to guard their shores while we and the Emperor sacrifice men and treasure in the common cause. How long can we go on? *Mon Dieu!* How different all would have been if the Imperial forces had been commanded by a general like the Russian field-marshal, Alexander Vasilievich Suvárov!"

Though Emma would not admit it, she was growing heartily weary of tirades that went on and on over the same ground and back to the starting point.

"My dear Miledi, what would I do without you? You alone understand my tortured heart—how I thank the stars I am blessed with your friendship!"

If the Queen remembered, she rang a bell, which was answered by a page bringing wine-glasses and a decanter of *Vino Greco*, a yellow muscadine that could be drunk immoderately without intoxicating. Emma looked forward to this pleasant interlude, which always exhilarated the conversation; but sometimes the Queen went on talking, and the guest was left in a mood of irritable expectancy.

Both Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan complained of Emma's temper. "I can't endure tantrums at my age," the Minister asserted. "I must

have peace, if only for the sake of my health; nowadays you're never happy unless the house is filled with a mob. How much did ye lose last night playing *tresette*?"

"Forty ducats," she sulkily replied.

"Good God, Emma! Where do you think the money is coming from? This nonsense must cease; I'm not going to have my house used as a gambling club by needy *émigrés* and doubtful Italians. Do you hear? These card-parties will have to stop!"

"I must be allowed some excitement in my life; everything is so dull—the same things day after day. I sometimes wish the French would come—it would be a change!"

"For us, certainly! I could not remain here, nor could I hope for another diplomatic post elsewhere. Retirement in Pembrokeshire ye would find somewhat duller than Court life at Naples."

Emma sighed. "I know! Sure, I'm an ungrateful wretch to complain when I have everything to make me happy. I'm sorry, Sir Will'um!"

Her husband looked at her kindly. "Ye can't help it, my dear—I foresaw that if we married the difference between sixty-six and thirty-one might produce events."

Overwhelmed by contrition, Emma flung herself on the floor beside his chair and clasped his hand. "No, Sir Will'um, my perverseness hasn't anything to do with that."

Gently he smoothed her tumbled curls. "Ah, but it has! Your blood still runs hotly in your veins, while mine is cooling down; sometimes I ask myself if I did right to make you 'Miledi'."

"What would have become of me if you hadn't?"

"Someone younger might have come along, someone who could have given you children," he said, glancing sharply at her downcast face.

"Greville was young—but he did not act very kind by me."

"Sweet Em, Charles was born middle-aged—not that I esteem him less for it—indeed, I owe much to his mature judgment—I only complain that he doesn't inform me sufficiently about my affairs. Ross and Ogilvie write that they receive nothing from my estate; I shall suggest selling the inn at Milford when it is completed, or giving a long lease of it to put some money in Ross's hands."

"Greville would oppose it—he's already provoked because you won't transfer some of the property to him to improve with borrowed money. You'd be no worse off, because he'd pay the same rent you

now get from the farms. I can't see why you won't oblige him, as he says he could increase his income that way."

"That proposal would put the very best part of the estate absolutely out of my power. I am sensible that Charles is in a sort of awkward situation after the pains he has been at for turning Milford into a packet port. But I never said I would transfer any of the property in my lifetime. What I did say was, that in the case of my death, he would be the person to profit first and most."

The Ministry at Naples was worth three thousand five hundred pounds a year, a sum totally insufficient to meet the demands made upon Sir William's hospitality. His long residence at the Court, coupled with the fame of Emma's beauty and accomplishments, had made his house so well known all over Europe that every foreigner came well provided with letters of recommendation. Four years ago an overdraft, however large, would not have disturbed the Minister's serenity, but in the interval he had grown old. Repeated attacks of bilious fever had robbed him of vigour and complacency; he was harassed by fears of losing his post, lest an accident befall his collection of vases, by the certainty that a French invasion would precipitate both calamities. He confided his thoughts to Greville:

"I make no preparations to save my property in case of accidents, lest it should give alarm here, but it wou'd be a cruel case shou'd I lose the finest collection of vases that ever were seen, and which with my pictures are surely of the value of 12 thousand pounds; however, shou'd affairs take a more alarming appearance, I shall not be so scrupulous, but endeavour to secure them."

Meanwhile the safety of the Sicilies engrossed the Government. Regular troops, under the supervision of Sir John Acton, formed a chain of cantonments from Sulmona in Abruzzo to Gaëta on the coast of Terre di Lavoro; the pay of all ranks was augmented and great enthusiasm prevailed. King Ferdinando's intention to march at the head of his soldiers was modified in order that several loads of furniture from Caserta might arrive before him. The Royal Standard was to be hoisted above the Benedictine Convent of Monte Casino, a strategic point looking over the plain of the Liris to the frontier of the Roman States.

June the 20th was the date fixed for the King's departure; the Court was to accompany him to Poggio Reale, a mile along the road

from Porta Capuana. Sir William, in the Windsor uniform, rode beside His Majesty, ahead of the equerries and foreign Ministers. Emma was equally favoured, occupying a seat in the Queen's carriage. The streets were thronged with people who clapped and shouted "*Viva il Re Lazzaroni!*" "*Bravo Nasonel!*"

"But none shout '*Viva Carolina!*'" the Queen wistfully commented.

"'Tis because His Majesty is the only Prince in Italy brave enough to oppose General Buonaparte," said Emma, comfortingly.

"Can such a resolve be maintained?"

To Emma's surprise, Sir William attached significance to this remark when she repeated it. "'Tis the spectacular nature of the hostile preparations that cause me to question their true purpose," he said. "I am sure that this Government is treating, and, earnestly desirous of a decent peace, dreads the appearance of a party within the kingdom which only awaits certain support to manifest French sympathies."

"I don't believe the Queen would act double-faced to me, and she has no reason to do aught but hate the French and must desire to see them beat."

"Possibly she thinks that by preserving her forces when the odds are against her she has a better chance of future victory. If the Queen acts secretly you must not ascribe duplicity—no ruler surrounded by enemies can afford to be completely frank. Maria Carolina's position is particularly cruel: scarcely one of the *Chefs de Cour* but has a son, a brother or a near relation confined in a castle under suspicion of having been more or less concerned in the many horrid conspiracies against their Majesties and the Government."

Within a week of the King's departure for San Germano Sir William's suspicions were confirmed by Prince Castelfidardo, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who formally announced that his Government, being in treaty with the French for a separate peace, had signed an armistice with General Buonaparte on the 5th of June, pending a peace now being negotiated at Basle by the Marchese di Gallo.

"Well, I never!" cried Emma indignantly. "I'll not believe the Queen again, I declare I won't! Fancy me, listening to her rage against the French, drinking it in as gospel-truth, and all the time this country was acting false to us."

"Don't leap so hastily to conclusions, my love! I am convinced the

Queen expressed no less than her true sentiments, and ye must remember that in war a retreat may be a strategic advance!

Emma conveyed her displeasure by keeping away from Palazzo Reale, where the Queen and the royal family lived in seclusion, protected by a guard from the King's German regiment of cavalry. The Prince of Saxe, son of Prince Xavier of Saxony, as Officer of the Guard, had apartments in the palace; he it was who first informed Sir William of the peace terms offered to the Pope. "Have ye heard? His Holiness is to pay the Directory four million of *scudi*—a third in gold, another in silver and the rest in corn. He is to relinquish all pretensions to Avignon; Bologna and Ferrara are to remain totally independent of Rome; Ancona is to be delivered immediately to the French." Negligently extended to his full height, the handsome young soldier smoked and tilted back and forth on the hind legs of one of the Envoy's painted chairs.

"Then the Marquis de Gallo will find it difficult to procure an offer he can with propriety lay before his Sovereigns," said Sir William.

"Nothing he can secure will be acceptable to Her Majesty, who rages ceaselessly at the grim necessity of parleying with the enemy. My Lady," said the Prince, turning his fine eyes full upon Emma, "the Queen wonders why you forsake her?"

Emma was confounded and bit her lip. "Did she send a message?"

"No, Madame; she said she would die rather than ask a favour of anyone, and if you misjudged her she would bear it with her other misfortunes."

For two days longer Emma shunned the palace. Meanwhile H.R.H. Prince Augustus Frederick and his suite arrived, driven from Rome by the news of six thousand French troops marching through the Romagna to take possession of Ancona. Having had no time to make plans, the royal party claimed Sir William's hospitality.

"My God, what will *this* cost?" the harassed Minister demanded of Omnipotence.

In the course of the next few hours hundreds of French Royalists reached Naples. Aged officers of the old régime wearing shabby uniforms and cumbersome swords rode on horseback beside antiquated vehicles accommodating painted and powdered *grandes dames*, miscellaneous packages and household goods. Others, tramping on foot, limped through Porta Capuana days after their more fortunate compatriots had found themselves lodgings.

Emma utilized Prince Augustus's ceremonious call at the palace as an easy means of terminating a self-imposed banishment. Accompanying the Royal Duke and Sir William to the threshold of the *Sala di Ricevimento*, she waited to attract the Queen's attention. The reunion affected them both, but Maria Carolina betrayed no emotion until they were alone in the dark salon. "You have avoided me, Miledi. Why? Do you believe I contrived this abominable truce?"

"I think you must have known of it!" Emma bluntly rejoined.

"And I remind you that the King and Sir John Acton are at the seat of war, not I! They deemed it essential to gain time until the Imperial army is ready to take the field with reinforcements of fifty thousand foot and twenty-two squadrons of cavalry."

"Then the Armistice is not a preliminary to peace with the French?"

"Do you suppose I have forgotten the murder of my sister and her husband? Do you think, dear friend, I would forego vengeance? The overthrow of that vile nation is the dearest wish of my heart."

"Drawing back is no way to beat an enemy, and I don't understand it."

"Miledi, all is complicated, a vicious circle from which we cannot escape singly. To achieve success the Italian States must be united against the common enemy, but we are far from that happy condition. Savoy and Nice have been given to the enemy; Genoa is invaded: His Holiness the Pope has agreed to a ruinous peace; my son-in-law professes neutrality, yet the French overrun Tuscany, and Buona-partte is at Leghorn threatening Commodore Nelson's ships with cannon mounted on the ramparts."

"Captain Fremantle, of the *Inconstant* frigate, told Sir Will'um that the Tree of Liberty is planted in the square, and the Goddess of Liberty was carried in a procession."

"That is the Grand Duke's neutrality!" the Queen bitterly rejoined.

Emma felt greatly comforted by the conversation, but blamed herself for entertaining unjust thoughts. Her daily visits to the palace were resumed, and she organized card-parties and musical evenings to sustain the royal spirits. Sir William played his viola, the Prince Saxe a guitar or a flügel horn, the Queen and Emma supplied vocal performances.

King Ferdinando and General Acton remained on the frontiers of Abruzzo with the army that steadily increased in numbers. De-

spite the evident determination of the Sovereign, confidence was at a discount; no one believed that Count von Wurmser would beat General Buonaparte, who had established a fabulous reputation. Bankers and merchants alike denounced increasing expenditure on hostile preparations which must be abortive if the Austrians could not achieve a decisive victory in the north. Uncertainty gradually paralysed trade; money was withdrawn from the *Banco di Credito*; specie was scarce, and conditions became similar to those preceding the crisis of 1794. The *giunta* functioned as usual and slowly dispensed justice and retribution.

In August and September Marshal Wurmser, upon whom Neapolitan hopes depended, suffered a series of defeats in northern Italy, and the truce entered upon as a *ruse de guerre* became a bitter prelude to capitulation. Prince di Belmonte, ordered to Paris to negotiate a peace, was unsuccessful in bringing his mission to a quick conclusion. The French Directory, in their turn, were anxious to gain time. Smarting under the affront, the Queen wrote a spirited letter to the King at the army headquarters in the Monastery of Monte Casino.

"But I shall have to follow up my words with a visit to San Germano, otherwise fatal concessions will be made. *Chère Miledi*, you know His Majesty when he is attacked by a fit of low spirits? He gives way utterly. In his last *billet* he assures me he has a premonition of a great misfortune soon to fall upon him. This alarms me, as he may endanger the kingdom in order to prove himself right. We must be firm and very careful with the French Directory, who only gain time for their evil schemes to mature."

"There's little more they can do, Ma'am; unless they try to take Corsica."

"That is what I anticipate. I would warn Sir William to expect an alliance between France and Spain, directed against England. There can be no doubt that both countries wish to exclude Great Britain from all Mediterranean ports. Tell the Chevalier to inform his Ministry that King Carlos recently reproached His Majesty with acting in opposition to his advice and the interests of Spain, saying: *soon he should be obliged to take another course with him*. I only repeat what His Majesty confided to me because King Carlos did not write in Italian as usual, but in Spanish!"

This information, and a copy of Maria Carolina's letter to Ferdinando, were regarded by Sir William as the most important docu-

ments Emma had procured since she constituted herself secret agent for Britain.

"But, at the risk of seeming ungrateful I wish Her Majesty wrote a larger hand and was less prolific in expression. 'Twill take several hours to transcribe her epistle, and the dispatch to go with it involves no small labour," Sir William sighed.

While he drafted his report to Lord Grenville, Emma began to copy the royal letter. The day was intensely hot: no breeze filled the bright sails of fishing-boats that lay mirrored on a sea of deep blue glass; a brazen sun blanched the houses round the bay into livid radiance; burnt-up gardens and lava pavements gave back a shimmering haze; from the narrow streets rose a thousand stench and a million flies, which floated under the awnings into Palazzo Sessa.

Dropping her pen, Emma rested her throbbing head on her hands. "My God, how sick I feel! Do you think I've got the smallpox, Sir Will'um? A lot have died of it in the Piccolo, and three nights ago me and mother met a corpse being taken to the Campo Santo."

"Ye've both had the cow-pox."

"But does that always save people?"

"'Tis supposed to give immunity; certainly I've never heard of a case of the true pox afterwards. Until now you've felt quite safe—in many ways you're losing your old confidence, my dear. And that is a pity." Turning a page of foolscap, he added: "—a great pity." His pen creaked calmly over thick, gilt-edged paper.

"Wouldn't you be sorry if I'd got the smallpox?"

"Extremely—but I don't think you have!" Sir William stopped writing to take snuff. Each nostril curled in a separate grimace of pleasure imparting to his large, aquiline nose an appearance of sensitive mobility uncommon to that feature. A green silk handkerchief tied over his shaven skull made him look, with his dark complexion and black eyes, like an aristocratic brigand. His wig, removed for comfort, embellished a bust of Jupiter. To Sir William's chagrin, repeated bouts of fever had destroyed his luxuriant hair.

"I cannot understand, my dear Em, why you nullify serenity by envisaging disasters; personally I find the world sufficiently provoking without meeting trouble half-way."

"Though we've lived together ten years you don't understand me at all," she angrily retorted.

Upstairs in her room Emma lay on the bed with a mirror in her hands. She held it at every angle, studying her face, neck, arms and

hair. "Just to think you're thirty-one!" she told her image. "Though there's no lines that I can see, yet you are different from what you was when you came to Naples."

Her face was lovely, but it had lost the dewy freshness which had lingered far beyond girlhood, the sweet, confiding charm that captivated Romney, the Duchess of Argyll, the great Johann Goethe and the simple peasants of Ischia who fell on their knees begging her to grant favours in the name of the Virgin. In maturity both Emma's countenance and her figure had gained in grandeur. As Sir William said in a speech which introduced the Attitudes: "Lady Hamilton is a living example of the Greek conception of beauty, as portrayed at the end of 500 B.C., when Greek art was at its highest point of perfection. In fact," he was in the habit of confessing with a deprecating smile, "I frequently call Her Ladyship 'My Grecian'."

"But, good God, who wants to be a statue?" Emma demanded of her reflection.

Receiving no satisfactory response, she tucked the mirror under the pillow and lay with half-closed eyes. Her room faced west, and she looked down the steep shoulder of Pizzafalcone to Villa Reale and the Chiaia, with its white palaces gleaming at the base of the tree-girt slope that curved to meet the grotto of Posilipo. Since Sir William's severe bout of bilious fever at the beginning of the year Emma had not rejoined him in his large apartment overlooking the sea. Petulantly determined, he declined to relinquish solitary state. "Dearest Em, I no longer feel equal to the give and take of close association. If I cannot sleep I wish to read, and you object to my Argand lamp; I, in turn, find fault when awakened by your nightmares. By occupying separate rooms neither will have cause to complain, and when you want me—put a candlestick on my writing-table!"

For a long time Emma detested the arrangement, but now she was becoming reconciled. At thirty-one a woman was a philosopher: by then she knew that to reach a goal was to lose it. . . . Ten years ago Sir Will'um languished for a smile, now he paid court as a duty. . . . It had been the same with Greville, Sir Harry and Jack Payne. . . . Love was like a phantom light that burnt bright till it was captured. . . . If young women were as wise as old ones they'd take care never to let a man feel certain. . . . But wisdom came when charm declined. . . . Good God, how long was it since any man had looked with desire in his eyes? . . . Two years? . . . Three years? . . . Respect

was the tribute now. . . . Very nice for those who knew nothing better. . . . Even the King had ceased to make amorous advances. . . . There was no one left but Lord Bristol, who was older than Sir Will'um and ready to follow any petticoat, no matter how dragged. . . . 'Twas sad that so much beauty should go a-begging. . . .

Tears forced their way between Emma's dark, curling lashes to trickle unheeded down her flushed cheeks. They made her headache worse, her self-pity more profound. Presently she turned over and hid her face in the pillow. Sobs shook her body, a bunch of plumes crowning the bed canopy trembled sympathetically.

Emma was ill for two days; on the third she entertained a large company and was forced to come downstairs. She found that Sir William had written his dispatch and copied the Queen's letter; the packet was to go on the morrow to England through the courtesy of Count Munster, equerry to Prince Augustus. "The messenger travels on the Count's private affairs, but I could not accept the accommodation without offering something towards the cost. 'Tis arranged that I pay for the courier's return; this will give you an opportunity to get any finery you want from London."

"I'll write to Greville and tell him to send some fashionable things and to pay the dressmaker's bill that has been owing goodness knows how long. Over and over I ask him to settle from your account, as you said I could, but he takes no notice."

"He treats me in like manner," Sir William gloomily observed. "I have written again asking what has become of the rents from my estate."

"Since he was made Vice-Chamberlain he's too grand to think of us; but I'll show him," said Emma, taking up a pen.

"We have not time to write to you as we have been 3 days and nights writing to send by this courier letters of *consequence* to our government. They ought to be very grateful to Sir William and *myself in particular*, as my situation at this Court is very *extraordinary*, and what no person as as yet arrived at; but one as no thanks, and I am almost sick of grandeur.

"We are tired to death with anxiety, and God knows where we shall soon be, and what will become of us, if things go on as they do now. Sir William is very well. I am not, but hope, when the cold weather comes on and we go to Caserta. I shall be better. Our house—break-

fast, dinner and supper—is like a fair; and what with attendance on my adorable Queen I have not one moment for writing, or anything comfortable. I, however, hope soon to get quiet, and then I will write to you fully. Pray, settle Hackwood's account. We desire it. And send me by the bearer a Dunstable hat, and some ribbands, or what you think will be acceptable. Pray do you never think of me. He is *our* Courier; so, pray, do not spare him. In haist, ever your sincere

Emma Hamilton.

P.S. I have now to-night an assembly of 3 hundred waiting."

She watched Sir William read the letter; he returned it without offering an opinion. "Don't you think it's well expressed?" she demanded.

"Quite, my love; but somewhat peremptory. I doubt if Charles will be pleased."

"I don't want him to be; 'tis time someone let Greville know that others are at Court as well as him. And doing more for England, too."

"I never find it serves any useful purpose to tell anyone that I feel his or her superior. Such candour only causes enmity, which at a later date may redound to one's disadvantage."

"I'm not so fond of caution; 't isn't my nature to mince words for fear of consequences. I'm civil and obliging to everybody, but I spare none that need correction."

"But, dear Em, behaviour can generally be judged from two angles, though you only admit one view—your own."

Two days after the courier's departure a letter arrived from Greville. It was long, and Sir William groaned before he had perused a half of it. "Listen to this:

'I am in hopes this year to begin the establishment of a building-yard for shipping on a scale to lead to great things. I shall hope to fix on a plan of considerable expense by proportioning the term of a lease to money laid out. The Quakers have sent out one ship to the S. Seas this spring & in about a month another will sail. The outfit of the first was between 3 & £4000 and the last between 5 & £6000. You will see that I am as diligent as if you had put me in the situation of having a share in the profit, under the arrangement I proposed last year, but you will always I hope, remember that no plan of mine ever was meant to free me from absolute dependence on your free will and friendship.'

Sir William broke off to voice exasperation. "This is all very well, but Charles forgets that the development of Milford into a port must be less important to me at my age than an income. If I cannot count on rents I shall find myself in a deuce of a fix if the Government fall into arrears with their payments. Sometimes as much as five quarters are due to me."

"Go on reading," Emma prompted. "Maybe Greville will have a plan: he was always clever at making a little money do a great deal."

Picking up the letter, Sir William muttered a summary as his eyes scanned the crabbed writing.

"I am now ready to make it appear to you that the money advanced will be paid by the rents, and your income not thereby diminished during your life, tho' the debt will remain a charge on it. . . . you will see I have realized my promise. . . . £5000 for improvements. . . . rents would not fall short or less than £1800, but you could not expect £2000, I can now say that your rent-roll is £2279.5s. 3½d. The arrears are greater than I intend them to be, but from this time they shall be less.'

Humm-mm-mm.—Here's something for you, Emma.

'I was led to expect a line from Lady H., relative to the little *protégée* whose education you have paid for since your marriage. I have not misunderstood your intention, viz., that you wished to put her into some trade, & by a benefaction once for all to settle her. I am surprised that it should be hinted more had been done than was necessary or required. Lady H. was better apprized than I was as to the whole, Mrs. C. having been with the child to Mrs. Blackburn's, & the expectation of seeing her friends was perhaps a little imprudently hinted to it, for she has never forgot the impression, & tho' she has outgrown the memory of persons her mind has I find been, for a young person, very reserved; & tho' I have not seen her for many years, I have had every attention & desired Blackburn to give her no high ideas, & I am convinced the economy and prudence of the family she is in cannot be exceeded, for Blackburn & his wife have now no other scholar, & has a very small income, which with prudence & the aid of Emma's board make out a decent living. I inclose an answer which Mr. B. received on my saying that she must choose a situation, & from various difficulty I have said that during the present half-year the option must be made; you will see that she

is desirous to do anything, & has sense enough to see the difficulty of her situation. I do not find that she is handsome; Blackburn says that she has very large eyes & a sensible look, & small, but very active, sometimes ailing, supposed to be worms. I hope you will excuse my tardiness in relieving you from this charge. I have thought a little money might be an inducement for a clergyman to marry her, & then I might help him on; but, if she does not make an impression on a good sort of man, I am sure I cannot find one for her; & then I do not know whether you would approve such aid. I inclose the last account, by which you will have all before you, & may give me your clear decision. I am still uncertain of her history, but I believe her to be niece to Mrs. C., and that her parents are alive; this she should know, for her age is now such as to make it proper to give her at least the comfort of knowing, or the certainty that she cannot be the better from receiving the information, neither of which I am able to give unless Lady H. will inform you, or communicate to me her wishes.' ”

“ Well, I never! ” Emma weakly ejaculated.

Sir William did not look up. Carefully folding the letter he placed it on the table and covered it with his hand, putting his weight upon it as if it was important to press the pages very flat. At last he said: “ Don't you think it is time to tell me the truth about this child? ”

Emma sat still. Her heart fluttered; words would not come. She was caught now. . . . There was no way out. . . . Greville had tied a noose round her neck. . . . Left her as he had done before to do the best she could. . . . God, how she hated him! . . . But did she? . . . Had little Emma got her big eyes from Greville? . . . Jack Payne had big eyes too. . . . Black ones. . . . Why hadn't Greville said if Emma's eyes were black, hazel or blue? . . .

“ My dear,” Sir William was saying, “ I really must insist that you tell me—I shall not make it difficult.”

“ I'll ask Mam,” Emma answered wildly.

“ Oh, no; you must tell me now without consulting your mother or anyone else. The little girl is yours, of course; is the father Greville? ”

Emma hung her head; her pretty hands tucked and pleated the lap of her dress. “ I don't know,” she whispered huskily.

“ Do you mean that you really don't know, or that ye don't wish to tell me? ”

"I really don't know, but I think and believe 'tis Greville's."

"Evidently Charles does too," Sir William answered dryly. "Now, if it be not Charles, who else might be the father?"

"Captain John Willett Payne, he that was Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales."

"Hugh Conway's friend? Then—I am beginning to remember—ye ran away that morning in Lombard Street when Conway and Payne had that accident."

Emma nodded acquiescence. "Did Charles know ye were dividing your favours?"

"I wasn't living with Greville then—I had a little house in Covent Garden, and he came to see me."

"Ye were a girl of the town?"

"No, never!" she answered indignantly. "I never had more than three lovers ever, and Jack Payne was the first."

"And I was the third?"

Emma had meant before Sir William, but she allowed the mistake to pass. Sure things were bad enough as they were. . . .

"And I thought ye so innocent, despite your association with Greville. It shows that the greatest worldling can have illusions! Had I known earlier, the knowledge might have made a difference. But 'tis too late now, and it really doesn't matter any more. I am too old, my dear, even to feel jealousy. And perhaps too experienced!"

Emma did not recover her composure for several days; humiliation urged her to avoid Sir William, and she invented any pretext that would take her from home. A languishing friendship with Mrs. Graeffe was revived and she spent a miserable two days as her guest at the old palace of Caserta. The drive back to Naples was hot and dusty, interrupted by long halts to allow bullock-waggons to pass with supplies for the army. No welcome awaited her at Palazzo Sessa; passing through the handsome reception-rooms, she felt like a little child ignominiously returning after a bout of temper. Upstairs neglect was still apparent: no one had remembered to close her shutters, and the bedroom hummed with the buzz of flies. Running to the head of the stairs, she shouted angrily for her maid; her voice reverberated mockingly through the marble galleries, and had no effect save to arouse a sleeping *castrato* on duty outside the *garde robe*.

"Is everyone dead in the house but you?" Emma demanded.

"Signora Madre sleeps as I did, but more comfortably, as she has

a pillow for her head, and I only a *cantero*," he replied in fluty tones.

Mrs. Cadogan was closed up in the *zanzariere*, but awakened in response to poking, and thrust her comfortable red face through the curtains.

"*Duwch*, gal, why didn't you say you was coming?" she demanded, kissing her daughter. "I wouldn't have let you come home without a welcome. Sir Will'um isn't back, I suppose? He's gone to Prince Castelcicala about a dispatch that came yesterday from London. It seems our fleet will quit the Mediterranean if Spain declares war on England, because we shouldn't have enough ships to protect the colonies."

"But the Sicilies will be invaded without Sir John Jervis to keep the French bottled up in Toulon."

"This Kingdom must make the best peace it can, and the Dons may give Ferdinando support—unless the Spanish Queen wants Naples for the Duke of Parma."

"My God, what will Queen Carolina say at Britain forsaking her?"

"She won't know yet awhile. Their Majesties and General Acton are at San Germano. 'Tis to be hoped the Queen is told before she gets back to Naples; Sir Will'um will find it more comfortable if she has got used to the idea."

The intelligence swept other considerations from Emma's mind, and she met her husband with all her old confidence.

"Mam says Sir John Jervis and the King's fleet will leave the Mediterranean if Spain declares war against England. But if our ships go, Corsica must fall to the enemy, so I don't believe it!"

"I think ye may be satisfied that the evacuation of the island is already *un fait accompli*."

"Do you mean we've surrendered to a threat? What must Commodore Nelson feel when he got half blinded taking the place?"

"I am told he laments the order from England, considering that the Mediterranean fleet is capable of performing anything and everything and equal to meet the world in arms."

Emma's eyes flashed and her colour rose. "Ah, that's what I like to hear—such talk is the prelude to victory and glory."

Sir William received official confirmation of the Spanish declaration of war on England while the people of Naples were digesting the peace terms accorded to them by Republican France. An *avviso* was pasted to the wall of the Vicaria, and for five *grana a scrivano pubblico*

pronounced himself ready to explain the terms even to the most stupid.

Dressed in threadbare clothes of black Verona cloth, the scribe stood on a chair to harangue like a *Rinaldo* the crowd gaping up at him.

“‘*Il Principe* di Belmonte Pignatelli acting for Ferdinando, *il Re-dell' due Sicilie*, did sign in Paris on the 10th of October, 1796, an agreement with *la République Française* promising that Naples, separating from her allies, will remain neutral; that she will forbid more than four vessels belonging to powers engaged against France to enter her ports; that she will liberate all Frenchmen accused of, and imprisoned within her dominions for, treason; that she will try to discover and punish the persons who stole the papers of Citizen Mackau, when he was French ambassador at Naples; that she will allow Frenchmen freedom in religious worship; that she will grant such privileges as shall give to France in the ports of the Two Sicilies, benefits equal to those enjoyed by the most favoured flags. His Majesty King Ferdinando furthermore agrees to recognize the Batavian Republic, and will consider her a party to the present treaty of peace.’”

The *scrivano's* listeners generally agreed that the Sicilies had got off very lightly, and that in many ways the prohibitions were a good thing.

A secret and additional article to the peace treaty had been copied by the Queen and given surreptitiously to Sir William. It was an engagement to furnish the French Republic with eight million livres Tournois, the equivalent of two million Neapolitan ducats, in the space of one year.

“*Ach Gott! Ach Gott!*” groaned Maria Carolina, “where is so much money to come from? The country is already taxed more than it can bear; to put further burdens on the people only increases the danger of revolt. But I am not consulted and my opinion is no longer heeded. The King and General Acton arrange our policy to their mutual satisfaction!”

“’Tis quite apparent,” Sir William said afterwards, “that the Queen has lost her supremacy and the King has grasped the reins. One must now expect closer collaboration with Spain and a loosening of the ties with Austria. So far I am unable to fathom what is going on,

though I perceive there is now little harmony between Her Majesty and General Acton."

"The Queen told me she has private reasons to be much displeased with him, though she should ever respect him and would continue to do him every service in her power," Emma answered.

"Lord Pembroke, who made the natural history of your sex the principal study and occupation of his life, once told me that when he found it difficult to account for any strange event, by bringing in a woman the enigma was immediately solved."

"I don't know what you mean by that, Sir Will'um! The Queen says she is ignored because of defeats in the north. Sir John Acton declares the Sicilies will be lost if the King depends on the Imperial soldiers, who run at the sight of a Frenchman, and advises conciliating France and Spain. I don't need to tell you," Emma cried, "how the Queen rages when she and I are alone together. Last week she wrote to the Emperor begging him to replace Field-Marshal Wurmser with a younger commander, for, as she says, only the young are quick enough to keep pace with these times."

"Had Her Majesty's advice prevailed three months ago, Italy in all probability would have been saved. But it is well known that the daughters of the Empress Maria Theresa had very tender hearts, susceptible to sudden and violent impressions—indeed, the Emperor Joseph told me so himself. Now I believe such an impression has lately been made on the heart of the Queen of Naples by the Prince of Saxe, and I think it highly probable that General Acton also perceived the growing attachment, which, of course, explains his completely changed attitude."

"Do you mean he'd punish the Queen by turning towards France and Spain?"

"I have seen jealousy cause stranger conduct."

"But you didn't believe that the Queen and Sir John was ever lovers!"

"I *did* not—but now I'm beginning to question."

Emma's secret hope that Commodore Nelson would visit Naples before Christmas was unfulfilled; instead she entertained Sir Gilbert Elliot, who, after two years and four months as Viceroy of Corsica, was in Naples completing official business before returning to England. The Viceroy was a wit, a *raconteur* and a Scotsman, attributes that strongly commended him to Sir William. Emma was less happy in his company. Cheerful and genial by disposition, his friendliness

assumed a jovial quality in her society that she recognized as the manner reserved for beauties of easy virtue. Her defence was an excessive assurance; she talked too loudly and too much; she posed and unconsciously assumed the behaviour Sir Gilbert expected. Emma learnt this from overhearing his remarks to his *aide-de-camp*. "Last night," he said, "we had the 'Attitudes' by candle-light. I wish ye could have seen them—they reveal a different side of Lady Hamilton to the good-humoured vulgarity with which she commonly solicits admiration."

"She is all nature, and yet all art," Colonel Drinkwater returned.

"With men her language and conversation are exaggerations of anything I ever heard anywhere. I am wonderfully struck with these inveterate remains of her origin, though the impression is much weakened by seeing the other ladies of Naples."

Knowledge of the Viceroy's opinion increased Emma's confusion and the loudness of her manners; she was thankful that on Christmas day he left for Rome on an inquiry into the Pope's disposition to resist the French. But he was back again for King Ferdinand's birthday on January the 12th, which, according to custom, was celebrated by a general *gala* and *Bacio Mano*. Before the public dinner at noon the British Minister had to present numerous English travellers, also French and Corsican *émigrés*—which necessitated a full evening dress soon after breakfast. Hoops were still the rule for Court, and Emma wore a wide one, holding out a spangled white gauze petticoat that glittered almost as brightly as her diamonds. Her hair, powdered and elaborately disposed in curls and ringlets, was surmounted by a *chiffonet* of Italian gauze, strings of white pearls, five lilac-tipped white feathers and several diamond pins.

Dubiously she surveyed her reflection; the dress accentuated the generous dimensions of bosom and shoulders. Emma was putting on weight; she tried to believe that size was advantageous to her beauty, but was not easy about it. In the garish morning light she feared she looked as vulgar as the Viceroy had said.

"Do you think I am getting fat?" she anxiously demanded of Mrs. Cadogan.

"You're no longer a gal, and there's no denying you're buxom," came the unsatisfactory reply.

The palace was thrown open to the populace, who jostled up the branching marble staircase to gape at royalty filling themselves with food and wine just like ordinary men and women. Their Majesties

dined in the *Sala di Corpo Diplomatico*. From the painted ceiling fat cupids coyly peeped down upon the King and Queen of Naples, the Hereditary Prince and three of the Princesses, gloomily devouring *minestra verde*, *frutti di mare*, macaroni and ice cream. Foreign Ministers stood right and left of their Majesties. On the opposite side of the table prelates and friars, courtiers and foreign visitors, formed a semicircle of smirking faces and fine clothes. Beyond, constrained by red cords, surged the populace, talking, pointing, spitting, gesticulating and fighting for standing-room on the gilded couches ranged against the damask walls.

Emma found herself wedged near Sir Gilbert Elliot and Count Edouard Dillon, whose regiment, after the evacuation of Corsica, formed part of the garrison of Ferraio in the Island of Elba, seized by Commodore Nelson as a safety measure following upon the French march into Leghorn at the end of June. "Le Beau Dillon" had outworn his nickname, but he retained his long lashes and his charm for women. Neapolitan Jacobins, remembering the accusations of Parisian pamphleteers, whispered that the Franco-Irish soldier of fortune was irresistible to the living Queen as he had been to the wife of the Capet. . . .

"I cannot help recollecting that the last public royal dinner I saw was at Versailles," Sir Gilbert said, "where the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, was in all the glory and lustre of Burke's morning star. Then there was much less probability of her dreadful reverse than there is now of catastrophe to her sister."

"This kingdom is going the way of France. I see the same expedients to overcome national insolvency—tax-edicts, fabrication of paper money, confiscation of church property, rising prices and the pampering of one class at the expense of another."

"And an endeavour to hide the actual state of the revenue by lavish expenditure of money so procured!"

"With recourse to the most dangerous device of nervous governments—*lettres-de-cachet* and imprisonment without trial."

"I should not be at all uneasy if the Queen and Acton, who is exactly made to suit her, could decide on their own views. I really admire the Queen," said the Viceroy; "she has a strong, powerful mind, and is full of courage, vigour and firmness."

At this point Emma lost her place in the crowd; she lost, too, the remainder of an interesting conversation.

After enduring the *Bacio Mano*, the King celebrated his birthday

in a manner congenial to himself: he resumed the *chasse*. A shooting-party of nine guns, which included Sir William, was invited to spend ten days at the royal hunting-ground of Persano. A small crowd sullenly waited at Porta del Carmine to see the cavalcade of huntsmen, lurchers and mastiffs. As Ferdinando rode between the twin towers of *Fidelissima* and *La Vittoria*, a legless cripple strapped to a trundle spat at his horse. "Bah! Your end will soon come, *Nazone*," he shouted. "*Viva la libertà!*"

While the royal party demolished game that had multiplied during Ferdinando's preoccupation with state affairs, his soldiers were dying of fever at an even greater rate in the cantonments in Puglia and Abruzzo. Notwithstanding the peace, an army of eighty thousand men were to be kept on the confines of the kingdom so long as the French remained in Italy.

"The peace we signed in Paris is nothing more than armed neutrality," the Queen told Emma. "Indeed, the armistice was to be preferred, as it excluded a perfidious enemy who can now enter the Sicilies under the mask of friendship. Soon we are to be *honoured* by a Minister from the Republic, General de Canclaux. He was an officer in French service during the Monarchy, and therefore may be less detestable than that odious 'Citizen' Mackau."

In less than a month fourteen thousand of Ferdinando's soldiers died of fever and hundreds of deserters made their way to Naples. From the rookeries of Abbascio Puort' and the caves cut in the tufa on Monte Calvario issued stories of overcrowded quarters, lack of food and clothing, and neglect on the part of officers. Murmurs of discontent grew so insistent that Sir John Acton proceeded on a tour of inspection. His inquiries brought retribution to the guilty and satisfaction to Naples; a colonel and two majors were broken on the wheel in the courtyard of the Vicaria.

Outside the Kingdom things were going from bad to worse. Mantua surrendered to the French, from the Romagna General Buona-parte threatened the capital. Pope Pius VI and the Mesdames of France were hourly expected in Naples, but only the ancient Princesses arrived, His Holiness having chosen disastrous peace rather than exile. Yet Naples made Carnival with unabated ardour, San Carlo was illuminated and fireworks let off from Castel dell' Uovo put Vesuvius to shame.

"I should have expected the loss of Mantua to cause a much greater impression on this Court," Sir William remarked. "I always thought

the fate of Italy depended on that fortress. In my opinion neither this kingdom nor any of the Italian Powers can be secure under any partial peace that allows a body of French to keep its footing in any part of Italy."

"None but the Queen looks to the future," Emma thoughtfully answered. "And she thinks more about the Grand Duchess Clementina coming to wed the Prince Royal than of the ruinous peace the Pope has signed."

"There's certainly more going on than we know."

"I can tell you this, Sir Will'um. The Queen says that General Acton gives a great dinner this night to Monsieur de Vernial, the French Minister going home from Constantinople, and Sir John actually sent him a *billet* to inform him of the French taking Mantua!"

"It is all very curious—particularly as His Excellency has repeatedly told me that if the French should march the smallest body of troops into the Pope's state, the Neapolitan army would immediately advance and the peace would be at an end."

Naples Bay presented a changed appearance since British ships of war had withdrawn from the Mediterranean. Prior to the peace between the Republic and Naples the harbour was crowded with vessels loading stores and live-stock for the fleet and the garrison of Corsica. It had been a common sight to see English Ships of the Line at anchor off the royal yard at Castel-à-Mare and small craft careened on the strand below the arsenal. Now the only warships to be seen lay off Molo Grande. They were two Neapolitan 74's: the *Sannite*, flagship of Marshal Fortiguerra, and the *Guiscardo*, commanded by Conte de la Tour. Accompanied by four frigates, they were to sail two days hence for Trieste to bring the sixteen-year-old Austrian Archduchess to her bridegroom.

Lying on a couch in the mirror room, Emma watched gaily painted craft skimming over the water from all sides of the bay, carrying noble sightseers eager to view the luxurious cabin prepared for the future Hereditary Princess. Conspicuous among the boats was the British Minister's glittering white-and-blue barge with scarlet sails and the Union Jack fluttering at the stern. But for having swooned twice on the previous evening and again in the morning when she tried to rise, Emma would have been among the gay company on the water. During the year she had become increasingly subject to fainting fits, which Dr. Nudi attributed to an excess of sensibility. "Miledi needs

rousing," he told Sir William. "'Tis common for ambitious temperaments to become vapourish and melancholy when all aspirations are attained. Any fresh interest should be encouraged."

"I'm vastly obliged for your advice. Lady Hamilton is but thirty-two and very beautiful; I feel no doubt that nature will supply the necessary spur."

By means of a spy-glass attached to the stone balustrade, Emma watched Prince Augustus Frederick slowly mounting the gangway of the *Sannite*. The ladder was narrow, and H.R.H. was obliged to go sideways, aided by Count Munster, who pushed from a lower step, a manœuvre anxiously watched by Marshal Fortiguerra and Sir William, leaning over the bulwark. Just as the British Royal Duke heaved himself on board, Emma heard her door open and her name called. She looked up and saw the Cavaliere Francesco Caracciolo reflected in the mirrored wall.

"What an unexpected pleasure!" she cried with gay duplicity. "I thought you'd be on board the *Sannite* helping to receive the whole of Naples, for I declare there can't be anyone of quality left on shore."

"*Tolga Iddio!* I have no wish to trespass on board the ship of Capo Squadra Fortiguerra, who apparently is much better qualified to entertain royalty than a member of the illustrious family of Caraccioli. It was not always so; both the Emperor Frederick II and Charles of Anjou readily admitted themselves indebted to the courage of a Caraccioli."

"And so do their present Majesties: the Queen is for ever telling me that you are by far and away the best officer in the Neapolitan marine. 'Twas the opinion of my Lord Hood, who asked especially for you."

"Oh, I don't deny I have seen some service, and done some too: against the Algerine pirates, off Toulon, off Corsica and in the Lion's Gulf. As an acknowledgment my Sovereign entrusts me with the nautical education of Prince Leopold—what more could an ambitious officer desire than to instruct an eight-year-old boy?"

The Cavaliere made irony more poignant by a shrug and an expressive gesture with flexible hands. Eleven years had elapsed since Emma first saw Francesco Caracciolo at the opera; the interval had deepened his look of discontent. His lids still drooped lazily, half veiling sleepy, almond eyes, but his small, thin-lipped mouth had assumed a bitter twist, and his well-shaped brows constantly arched in a look of scorn. At forty-five he was a misanthrope, a man of many

grievances, the victim of an endless chain of sufferings, miseries and ill-rewarded services constantly recounted in a quiet, pleasing voice. He was a frequent visitor at Palazzo Sessa, a friend of Mrs. Cadogan's rather than of Emma's; *la Signora Madre dell' Ambasciatrice* provided an encouraging accompaniment of clicking knitting-needles to self-commiseration.

"Anyway," Emma retorted with asperity, "to make you nautical tutor to Prince Leopold is the greatest honour Their Majesties can pay you."

"On the contrary, My Lady, the greatest honour would be to bring to Naples the bride of the Hereditary Prince—that favour is given to Marshal Fortiguerra."

"The *Tancredi* could have gone as escort ship instead of the *Guiscardo*."

"What? And leave Conte de la Tour out of the picture? I assure you, My Lady, such a slight would never be offered to a foreign officer in the Neapolitan marine. Foreigners are privileged as we are not. I'll give you an instance I saw at Toulon. The *Guiscardo* was leading ship, and Milord Hood gave the signal to attack; instead Conte de la Tour shortened sail and fell back. For similar disobediences to an order I should have been brought before the *giunta*."

"Yet I've heard it declared that all officers serving King Ferdinando are treated alike."

"Perhaps I alone, as an honest man, have been the victim of malice and envy!"

To Emma's annoyance, the Cavaliere leaned across her couch to apply his eye to the telescope. She got a strong whiff of garlic and an opportunity to observe him at the close range generally reserved for affectionate relationship. She saw his swarthy, thick neck flecked with curly black hairs and grimed at the nape with grease from his queue. . . . His ears pierced by gold rings. . . . A thin necklace knitted by women of Taranto from the silky beard of the mussel, *Pinna Marina*—a talisman that preserved the wearer from drowning. . . .

"You must have found British sea officers very different to work with," said Emma, continuing the conversation. "Jealousy is unknown amongst them; indeed, there's none so anxious to find merit and reward it."

"There I must disagree again. One of the cruellest turns ever done to me was by Commodore Nelson when we both served in Admiral Hotham's squadron. I was given an opportunity to distinguish myself,

but, contrary to orders, Captain Nelson, as he then was, passed before me and stole the honour that should have been mine."

"'Tis natural for Commodore Nelson to be leader!"

"Even against orders! It was common knowledge that Admiral Hotham considered that he exceeded his duty."

"Admiral Hotham!" Emma scornfully repeated. "He's naught but an old woman who had a glorious opportunity of great victory two years ago, but was content with taking two French ships. Had Commodore Nelson got his way, 'twould have been the whole Republican fleet or death."

"So he *claimed*. For my part I am not impressed by the boasting little fellow. I know more than one marine officer of greater courage and ability whose exploits are unnoticed because they do not crow like cockerels."

"You wait!" Emma said vindictively. "The day will come when you'll have to acknowledge Horatio Nelson victorious as Lord Howe on the glorious 1st of June."

"That moment may have arrived," the Cavaliere responded with gentle sarcasm, "for I see a British sloop of war entering the bay—perhaps bringing news of the Commodore's triumph."

Emma sprang up and leaned over the balustrade. The sloop, running before the wind, was passing Torre del Greco. "'Tis the *Petrel* I do believe, flying a blue ensign: she must be sent by Sir John Jervis. Look! Sir Will'um's barge is going alongside the *Sannite* and he's coming down the gangway."

In her excitement Emma forgot she talked to a sea officer who did not share her pride in the British fleet. "Come with me to the *molo*," she cried, grasping Francesco Caracciolo by the sleeve. "Let us be the first to hear the great news, for something tells me it is glorious."

Coldly he drew back. "I am not impatient—if there has been an English victory I shall hear of it soon enough."



CHAPTER TWELVE

EMMA waited an hour at the end of the *Immacolatella* before she saw Sir William's barge leave the *Petrel* and approach the shore. Long before he was within earshot Sir William waved and gesticulated. Entering Porto Grande, he formed a trumpet with his hands and shouted: "A great victory by Sir John Jervis off Cape St. Vincent. Four Spanish Ships of the Line taken. Commodore Nelson, Captains Collingwood and Troubridge greatly distinguished themselves."

The barge drew alongside the jetty, and Sir William climbed the rusty iron ladder to the pylon, whereon a little sky-blue statue of the Virgin stood looking wistfully at the water. Lowering himself gingerly to the stones at her feet, he untied a packet of papers, unfolded the sheet, and read aloud:

"'On the 14th of February an action took place off Cape St. Vincent between Admiral Sir John Jervis's Squadron, consisting of fifteen Ships of the Line, and the Spanish Fleet comprising twenty-seven Sail of the Line, which resulted in the capture of four Spanish Ships, namely: *Salvador del Mundo*, 112 guns; *San Josef*, 112 guns; *San Nicolas*, 80; and *San Ysidro*—a 74.'"

Rendered impatient by her husband's deliberate enunciation, Emma propped herself against his shoulder to read for herself.

"Good God! The Dons had no less than six ships of 112 guns—and the *Santissima Trinidad* with 130! Look, Sir Will'um! Nineteen third rates and the *San Nicolas*—the 80 you say we took."

"This action confirms Commodore Nelson's opinion: 'The Dons make fine ships, but they cannot make men.'"

Springing to her feet, Emma paced excitedly along the narrow ledge that separated the base of the pylon from a drop of twenty feet into the harbour. "My God! What a victory! I want to hear more,

but can't sit still to listen. How glad the Queen will be that the Spaniards got a drubbing! Did we lose many killed and wounded? And which officer won the greatest glory?"

"I told ye from the barge; Commodore Nelson, with noble support from Captain Troubridge and Captain Collingwood. I had an account of the whole affair from Gordon Caulfield, Captain of the *Petrel*, who received it from an eye-witness of the battle. He says the Spanish fleet was sighted at dawn on the 14th, and half-past eleven o'clock Sir John Jervis's succeeded in getting up with it before the enemy had time to connect and form a regular order of battle. Sailing in single column ahead and astern of the *Victory*, the British ships passed through the Spanish fleet, a manœuvre that separated eight sail. Commodore Nelson was in the *Captain*, a 74 in the rear of the line. As our fleet advanced and became engaged, he perceived that the main body of the enemy were pushing to join their friends to leeward by passing by the rear of our column and only prompt measures could frustrate the design. Without hesitation he ordered his ship to wear, and, passing the rear of our squadron, directed Captain Miller to steer for the centre of the enemy's fleet—the *Santissima Trinidad*, *San Josef*, *Salvador del Mundo*, *San Nicolas*, *San Ysidro*, another first-rate and a 74. Spectators in the frigates expected at every instant to see the *Captain* annihilated by the overwhelming force to which she was singly opposed. But such is the superiority of British officers and men that the Spaniards got more than they gave. Commodore Nelson was soon joined by Captain Troubridge in the *Culloden*, and for an hour these two ships were closely engaged in an apparently unequal contest, that ended in so crippling the *Salvador del Mundo* and *San Ysidro* that they dropped astern to meet a gruelling cannonade from the *Excellent* whereupon the *San Ysidro* hoisted English colours. Disdaining to take possession of beaten enemies, Captain Collingwood pushed up with every sail set to aid Nelson, and from a range of ten feet fired into the *San Nicolas*, which, turning towards the wind, caused the *San Josef* to fall on board her. The *Excellent* passed on to the *Santissima Trinidad*; the crippled *Culloden* had fallen astern; the honour of resuming her station was claimed by the battered *Captain*. Commodore Nelson then boarded the *San Nicolas* and from thence climbed into the main-chains of the *San Josef*. On the quarter-deck of the first-rate he received the swords of the vanquished Spaniards."

"Nothing I ever imagined comes up to this for glory." Emma's

lovely face wore a strange look of triumph, her eyes shone and her cheeks glowed. She started to walk again, round and round the pylon, with steps free and buoyant as those of a wild creature. "How will England thank Nelson?" she cried.

"It is a custom to bestow Baronetage upon junior Flag Officers."

"Sir Horatio Nelson," Emma murmured. "Such a name was bound to gather honour."

"Our friend's feat of boarding one enemy ship from the deck of another must be unequalled in history, and I understand the exploit is already aptly termed 'Nelson's patent bridge for boarding first-rates'."

Emma declined to ride home in the carriage waiting at the end of the Immacolatella. "I must walk, Sir Will'um. I've never been able to feel excited and sit quiet—my feet must keep pace with my thoughts."

Taking her arm, Sir William accompanied her through Porto Piccolo, up narrow alleys darkened by tiers of wretched garments drying on poles projecting from crazy balconies. Every black doorway was tenanted by still and watchful figures, who, recognizing the trespassers, whistled significantly. Instantly heads were thrust from balconies and dangling linen pushed aside.

"*Buon giorno, Eccellenza! Come sta, Signora Ambasciatrice?*" shouted many voices. A man with a villainous countenance gesticulated hospitably. "*Se vi aggrada è al vostro commando!*"

"*Grazie, grazie, Egidio Palli,*" Sir William genially responded.

"Is your woman keeping well?" Emma asked, looking towards a shuttered window.

With his hands the man inscribed a curve. "*Sta incint'*," he answered succinctly.

Emerging into the sunshine, Sir William glanced back into the dark *vicolo*. "Should revolution break out, that cut-throat might be a valuable friend. I believe Palli has great authority among the *lazzaroni*, with the right to levy taxes on all transactions of his followers, honest and dishonest."

"Caterina says Palli cannot be killed because he vowed himself to the Souls in Purgatory by cutting his arm and placing a consecrated wafer on the wound—there's no end to the foolishness that Papists will believe."

"Superstitions often serve useful purposes, and in this case turn a rogue into a desirable acquaintance."

Emma and Sir William separated in Largo del Castello. "General Acton must be informed of our Naval victory, and you, Em, had better go at once to the Queen. Her Majesty will welcome the news more than anyone."

On her way to the palace Emma met the Mesdames of France driving back to Caserta in a great royal blue coach emblazoned with the arms of Louis XV; an old coachman in splendid livery sat on a velvet hammercloth embroidered with tarnished fleur-de-lys. Princess Adélaïde was dressed in pale blue and Princess Victoire in pink; each wore a hat nodding with plumes coloured to match the gown of the other. The Demoiselles retained delicately tinted complexions of youth crumpled by innumerable fine wrinkles. Princess Adélaïde bore traces of beauty, but lacked the vivacity of her younger sister. Neither appeared crushed by misfortune, unlike their lady-in-waiting, Comtesse de Narbonne, whose fears had drained her eyes of colour and furrowed her pale cheeks. As Emma dropped a curtsy, the Comtesse looked up and as quickly glanced away, but her royal mistresses bowed, and Princess Victoire threw a kiss to the lovely wife of the British Envoy.

Emma, who had free access to the palace, discovered the Queen still sitting in the State apartment in which she had received the visitors. Emma's eagerness to announce joyful intelligence was frustrated by Maria Carolina's more imperative need of a confidante.

"My dear friend, you find me nearly distracted by a multitude of annoyances aggravated by my powerless position to alter anything. I am treated without consideration, my feelings are not consulted, my judgment is ignored. I am bewildered by my position, by the almost antagonistic attitude adopted by General Acton and the irresistible influence he has gained over His Majesty." The Queen got up to look through the window; her back was to the room, but Emma could see and hear her agitated fingers drumming a tattoo on the glass. "Were you told, Miledi, that the Prince de Saxe set out last night for Manfredonia?"

"No!" Emma answered in unfeigned surprise.

"He was ordered to Vienna; I suggested that his departure should be delayed three days to allow him to sail to Trieste in one of the warships going to fetch the Archduchess, but I was informed *that* was impossible. Now the poor boy will be obliged to take a passage up the Adriatic in some miserable vessel—perhaps not even seaworthy. The dangers are innumerable, but in a ship of war he would

have been comparatively safe. Oh, for God's sake, Miledi, tell me you think he'll get there unharmed!" As she began to sob, Emma put a comforting arm round the heaving shoulders. Soon the Queen regained composure. "I love the Prince de Saxe like a son," she asserted.

"But for privateers and storms the Adriatic is safe enough; 'tis the western waters that are dangerous, or would be if it wasn't for the British fleet. Sir Will'um sent me to tell you, Ma'am, that Sir John Jervis has given the Spaniards a drubbing off Cape St. Vincent. Commodore Nelson covered himself with glory by attacking seven ships at once; one was the *Santissima Trinidad* of 130 guns, and five were first-rates. The action ended with the Commodore boarding the *San Josef* from the deck of the *San Nicolas*, passing as unconcernedly as we cross the Ponte di Chiaia."

"Why did you delay announcing such great news? Nothing could afford me more satisfaction than His Catholic Majesty's defeat by the brave disinterested Commodore Nelson. But tell me more—is the whole Spanish Fleet either captured or sunk?"

"Four ships are taken—two first-rates, a second-rate and a 74."

"How many escaped?"

"Four from twenty-seven," said Emma, counting on her fingers, "leaves twenty-three—but many will be too broke to fight again."

The Queen's disappointment was apparent. "Then, Miledi, the strength of the Spanish Fleet is but little reduced; I say this without disparaging the courage of the intrepid English, whom I admire from my heart."

Emma was nettled, and showed it. "There's not another navy afloat as could take four ships from an enemy twice as strong."

"Forgive me! My distracted mind demands the impossible—nothing less than the complete annihilation of those who desire our downfall. I must copy the good Chevalier and learn to be a philosopher able to face calmly the threat of revolution in this kingdom and the certainty of bankruptcy!"

While Sir William and Emma eagerly anticipated copies of the *London Gazette* giving an official account of the naval victory and the honours won, the Neapolitan Court anxiously awaited news from Venetia of the reinforced Austrian army commanded by the Archduke Charles. Upon his valour depended the date of the Archduchess Clementina's departure from Vienna. The courier, when he came, delivered dispatches that conformed only too closely to

precedent. The Austrians had suffered defeat at Tagliamento on the 16th of March, and the French, under Napoleon Buonaparte, were advanced as far as Klagenfurt on their way to Vienna. The plans of the royal family and the expectant bridegroom were thrown into the utmost confusion; messengers constantly passed between Caserta and the Imperial Embassy in Naples.

"'Tis getting as lively here as in the Toledo," Mrs. Cadogan reported from her balcony. "Count Esterhazy and his mistress have just gone past in his new britzka. Now it's stopped and he's getting out—'twould never do for him to take her to the palace," she added ironically. "Another new gownd she's got—red this time. It doesn't suit that bleached flaxen hair favoured by women from Avellino."

"The use of wood lye to produce flaxen yellow of many tints on the same head I take to be the true *flava casaries* of the Latin poets," Sir William announced from his desk.

"Oh, very likely," Mrs. Cadogan conceded, "but it don't become a woman that's pretending to be noble. Now look, Emy! Here come the Mesdames of France in their blue coach and no less than eight running footmen in King Ferdinand's livery! The Demoiselles will find a change after they move into the old palace and have to support their own grandeur."

"When the Princesses arrived they were given a suite of apartments," Emma contributed; "but as every noble *émigrée* who pleaded poverty has been added to the retinue, their suite now occupies a whole wing. I don't wonder the Queen is vexed, and at their keeping up all the same ceremonies and etiquette as they observed at Versailles. After the Hereditary Prince and Princess come there would be three Courts under one roof, and though the palace is large enough to house a dozen, the Queen says she will not be an inmate of royal *Albergo de' Poveri*."

"Nor pay for it either," Sir William summarized. "In the present embarrassed state of the privy purse it is no small matter to support scores of French *noblesse* whose only recommendation is poverty."

The British Minister spoke feelingly. The numbers had increased of stranded travellers who claimed as a right his hospitality; yet his official salary and his private income were both in arrears.

"Charles vouchsafes no reply to my repeated demands for information regarding my commitments at Milford. As to Ross and Ogilvie, they preserve an impenetrable silence, and the insecurity of postal communication between Rome and Venice cannot wholly account

for such neglect. There's no alternative but to entreat my Royal Master's permission to return home this summer to look into my affairs."

"I wish Greville would tell me if little Emma has a good situation."

"I wish Charles was more attentive altogether," his uncle irascibly responded.

Emma's exaltation caused by the victory off St. Vincent gradually subsided, also an extravagant hope that the event might inaugurate the return of the British squadron to Mediterranean waters. Reaction reduced her spirits to a low ebb; she attempted to counter it by collaborating with Mrs. Cadogan in aiding the Corsican *émigrés*, a regal legacy consigned to Sir William by the island's late Viceroy, and by entertaining with her voice and Attitudes English travellers beleaguered in the Neapolitan state. In her praiseworthy efforts she was supported by Mrs. Græffer, evicted from the Old Palace at Caserta to make room for the Mesdames of France.

"Mr. Græffer is lucky to have an agreement signed by the *Grand Maître* for lodging as well as salary, otherwise we should be homeless, like fifty other families turned out for those ridiculous old women. Let the Demoiselles be contented with a set of apartments is what I say!" Carry profoundly remarked.

"But you didn't like living in the old castle," Emma reminded.

"Haunted by a ghost that had died of the plague? Who would? I'm delighted to be in town, and living in Palazzo Francavilla means good society all the time. Caserta, when the Court is left, was like a dead place, and I always said the English garden was far too hard for Mr. Græffer. His work at Villa Reale is just a sinecure—at least, it would be if his salary wasn't reduced. I believe the royal family can hardly make ends meet!"

Carry Græffer's belief was not confirmed by the grand preparations to celebrate the marriage of the Hereditary Prince. In April their Sicilian Majesties, the bridegroom, Sir John Acton and Count Esterhazy proceeded to Foggia to meet the Archduchess, but a revolution in Venetia postponed her departure, and she did not reach the port of Manfredonia until the 18th of June. The marriage was immediately solemnized at Foggia, where the Court remained into July, gratified spectators of the honeymoon. Meanwhile Naples prepared to welcome the bride. House-fronts stained by the storm and dirt of years were rejuvenated to rosy tones with ox blood. The theatre of San Carlo was painted and gilded and all fly-marks polished from the

mirrored walls. Grand gala and illuminations were to last for three days, the Royal Standards of Austria and the Two Sicilies fluttered side by side, and every street was laced with garlands.

Before a general *Bacio Mano*, Sir William and Emma were given a private audience in a small ante-chamber off the *Sala di Ricevimento*. The Hereditary Prince wore a white-and-blue gold-laced uniform and the order of the *Toison d'Or*, wedding gifts from his brother-in-law, the Imperial Emperor. Martial felicity had so greatly contributed to the bridegroom's well-being that the uniform, made to pre-nuptial measurements, fitted him tightly as the skin of a sausage. No such salutary effect was discernible in the Princess Clementina, whose shapeless, childish figure had more angles than curves. She was small, black-haired and sallow. Her little face was pinched and anxious; in her dark eyes dwelt the same brooding sorrow and resignation to be seen in the eyes of captive monkeys. A low *décolleté* revealed her flat bosom and sharp collar-bones, misfortunes she tried to conceal with a gauze scarf ineffectually manipulated by her tiny, agitated hands. As she covered her neck, so she exposed fragile, drum-stick arms patterned with innumerable bruises. Noticing the marks, Emma recalled similar contusions on the plump flesh of Princess Luigia Amalia, vivid souvenirs of the Hereditary Prince's playful humour.

After the introduction and hand-kissing the bride sidled away from the group. As an individual she was not missed; symbolically she remained in the foreground.

"I love her tenderly," the Queen declared. "In every way the Princess Clementina is all I could wish. Watching her I recall my own bridal days, when, as a girl of fifteen, I became Queen of Naples. Yet how different I was! Ambitious and courageous, I never questioned that my destiny was to bring learning, freedom and happiness to my adopted country, qualities and beliefs fostered by my mother, who was the most enlightened ruler in Europe! My dear daughter-in-law seems strangely deficient in firmness and in ideas: I fancy no one has troubled to train her mind since her father died. But I am content that it is so; nothing is required of my niece but to satisfy Francesco and provide an heir to the throne."

Emma answered: "She doesn't look strong enough."

"That cannot be considered where the succession is concerned. I was always delicate, yet I have survived sixteen labours. But now, thank God, my duty is done; I can think of grandchildren and my

own inclination." As she spoke, the Queen fanned herself with a beautiful and curious fan, that had lately been the finest exhibit at Guastalla Claudio's in the Lanzieri. Fashioned from *lanapenna* mounted on tortoise-shell, the silky, yellow-brown filaments resembled burnished gold and cost as much. Longing for the fan, but daunted by the price, Emma had persistently "made offers" until, going into the shop on the usual errand, she had seen Le Beau Dillon purchase it for two hundred ducats.

Maria Carolina's thoughts veered to a less pleasant subject. "Have you seen the newly arrived Minister from the French Republic, Miledi? I confess I shudder at the thought of his lips on my hand."

"General de Canclaux looks quite ordinary, save that he wears his hair short and without powder; but the four secretaries are the greatest sights you ever saw, especially the first, Monsieur Trouve. His hair, very black, is cut short and stands up on end in all directions; he wears spectacles, a dark blue coat fastened with brass buttons close to his chin, a pair of black leather buskins with a narrow gold lace at the top, and a huge scimitar hanging from a broad black leather belt going over his coat."

"Monsieur Trouve formerly directed the *Moniteur* in Paris; he is one of the worst Revolutionaries; yet I am told to receive him graciously! What a position! To be forced by circumstances to crush all natural feelings! But what can we do? French and Cispadane troops are assembling in the Romagna, another body of French are at Ancona and a third is marching to Urbino—such movements make us fear some great event that will finally determine the fate of Italy."

"'Tis said the anxiety has given the Pope another paralytic stroke, and he may die any minute," Emma contributed.

"Worse may be in store for him!" the Queen gloomily rejoined. "If only the British fleet would return to the Mediterranean! In confidence, Miledi, can you tell me if there is any thought of it?"

"Not that I know of, though I long for the fleet to come back as much as does Your Majesty. Sir Will'um knows nothing officially, but the Master of the Manx brig *Cæsar*, the brig that's unloading barrels of herring at Porto Piccolo, reports seeing the *Ville de Paris* and a British fleet blockading Cadiz. Have you heard that Sir John Jervis is to be Earl of St. Vincent, and that Commodore Nelson was promoted Rear-Admiral of the Blue *before the battle*, and for his great part on that day becomes a Knight of the Bath?"

"The news reached Foggia while we were seated at the wedding banquet, and I uprose, like you, Miledi, to cry 'Hip! hip!'"

Sir William, as the doyen of the diplomatic corps, had left the reception-room in order to conduct his colleagues to the royal presence. Doorways, in line with each other, connected a series of vast, gorgeously decorated state apartments; thus the British Minister could be seen a great way off leading his procession. Usually the Ministers advanced with hushed tread, but on this occasion they were heralded by boots clattering on marble. So great was the tumult that King Ferdinando left his place to stare along the vista of open doors.

"'Tis but the members of the French Legation marching in buskins," Emma spitefully informed him.

The French Minister, behaving with great politeness, tactfully placed himself below all the representatives of crowned heads, but the good impression he created was determinedly counteracted by Monsieur Trouve, who went out of his way to stare everyone full in the face through his large, horn-rimmed spectacles.

Celebrations of the Prince's marriage continued on a grand scale through July and August. For several nights the dome of San Carlo was outlined with hundreds of lanterns, and fireworks were let off from the battlements of Castel dell' Uovo. H.R.H. Prince Augustus Frederick sedulously attended the Court galas and easily eclipsed all other guests by the magnificence of his dress and equipage.

Responsibility for the safety of his King's son weighed heavily on Sir William, and caused him to defer his visit to England although leave had been granted. The gaiety of the capital but thinly veiled unrest and anxiety for the future. In public the French Minister's behaviour continued circumspect, in private he was known to be fomenting sedition. His house was the rendezvous of the democratic French in Naples; agents of the *giunta* reported that a Tree of Liberty had been planted in his garden round which the company sang and danced the *carmagnole*. Meanwhile Madame de Canclaux opened her salons, but the Neapolitan nobility appeared chary of entering, despite promptings from the Court, who were eager to placate the enemy in their midst. From Rome came accounts of arrests and fresh conspiracies against the government. Civic Guards patrolled the streets, cannon loaded with grape-shot dominated the squares—desperate measures that were already nullified by the approach of Monsieur Joseph Buonaparte, appointed by his victorious brother to be Minister from the French Republic to His Holiness the Pope. In face of the

threat so close to their borders, the Ministry of the Two Sicilies was disposed to see salvation in the negotiations taking place at Udine between representatives of the Emperor and of France. Mantua, it was thought, must be restored if the peace was worth the parchment it was written on, and the sacrifice of the Austrian Netherlands would not be too high a price for re-possession of the key fortress to Italy.

Emma, a reflector of atmosphere, was far from happy. Inaction in the face of danger chafed her ardent spirit.

"Good God! I want to do something, instead of waiting, always waiting, for fate or General Buonaparte to act."

"Then pray help me to pack my vases and pateras, as I have no intention of allowing the cream of my collection to fall into the hands of plunderers, French or Neapolitan."

Emma set to work with a will, and in three weeks cleared the long galleries of everything but a pair of immense marble vases unearthed in Rome by Gavin Hamilton from the garden of Milo's villa on the Palatine. Having accomplished the task, she and Sir William dubiously viewed the array of packing-cases. "Seeing the only safe way out of the Kingdom is by way of Manfredonia and a boat to Trieste, I don't think we are better off with your treasures nailed up than when we had them to look at," said Emma.

"Except that I'm now in a position to seize an opportunity if it presents itself."

The wedding festivities that had made the summer memorable reached a climax with a super-fête at San Leucio to celebrate the Hereditary Prince's coming of age. San Leucio represented Carolina's best experiment in social reform—the colony of thirty-one virtuous families transported from the slums of Naples to live model lives of communal industry in a village specially built on the outskirts of the royal park of Caserta. Dwellings, a church, a hospital and the factory of Sant' Elena for the manufactory of silk had been erected out of the privy purse. Foreign agriculturists were engaged, mulberry trees planted and the best silk-worm eggs purchased in Milan. In return nothing was asked of the settlers but to work for the commonweal and to preserve the communal character of the colony. When once the enterprise was established, Ferdinando was as pleased to be the patron of a silk manufactory as Carolina was to be a benefactress; he dressed the artificers in green jerkins belted with red morocco and gave them befeathered black hats and the rank of King's

Guardsmen. Of the many laudable schemes inaugurated by Carolina, San Leucio was the only one to prosper and do her credit.

Emma and Sir William, driving to the fête from Naples, had the misfortune to lurch into a ditch when, a wheel coming off, their carriage broke an axle-tree. The accident happened on a stretch of lonely road, and there was no alternative to sitting on a wall while the groom went on horseback to fetch assistance.

"Good God, what a thing to happen!" Emma exclaimed. "Everyone was jealous of me being the one to open the ball with the Hereditary Prince, and now I shan't be there to do it! What *will* the Queen think?" Looking across at the coachman standing with the horses, she shouted angrily: "You must be a great fool not to see the wheel-pins was firm."

"Ss-sh!" said Sir William. "Accidents will happen; in a few minutes someone is sure to drive along who will give us a lift."

"Tis really stupid the way you excuse everybody. We might both be killed."

"But we are not," Sir William mildly rejoined; "neither do I think we shall be very late, because I see something coming."

As the equipage approached it proved to be a curricule and a pair of black stallions driven by the Spanish *Chargé d'Affaires*.

"Damnation!" muttered Sir William.

In ordinary circumstances the two Envoys barely acknowledged each other, but on the present occasion Don Josef de Bouligny drew up and politely accosted the enemy representative. "How vastly annoying to be ditched at this inopportune moment! Pray permit me to carry you with me, as I presume we are all bound for San Leucio?"

Sir William replied with equal aplomb: "You're extremely obliging. But for your timely appearance this provoking mishap would have put us in no small difficulty—Lady Hamilton opens the ball with the Hereditary Prince."

The curricule was built to hold two comfortably, thus Emma supposedly accommodated between the Envoys, really sat on the knees of both. This caused her great annoyance, as she was aware that the Spaniard, whom she disliked, was not indifferent to her charms. Josef de Bouligny was thirty-five, and the handsomest representative at the Court of Naples. He had classical features, a proud expression and agatine eyes half veiled by supercilious lids. His tall, graceful figure appeared additionally thin from his habit of dressing in black,

unrelieved save for a cravat of *point d'Alençon*. Driving his spirited pair with one hand, he dropped the other against Emma's thigh.

"Thank God the heats are somewhat abated," he remarked. "You, My Lady, have cause for gratitude, the Hereditary Prince being a *melting* partner even on a cold day."

Emma gave him an angry look from the tail of her eyes. "'Tis a great honour to open the ball with His Highness, and there's not a woman at Court who wouldn't be in my shoes! "

"Because she would be the most admired and lovely woman in Europe? Or because Lady Hamilton is engaged to dance with the heir to the throne of the Two Sicilies?" The pressure of Don Boulogny's hand became more insistent, but his voice remained quietly quizzical, the indolent voice of a diplomat fencing with words. Leaning farther back, he addressed Sir William. "Strange that two cousins should be so dissimilar as Prince Francesco and Louis, the Duke of Parma's son. The latter has the same great ability for enlightened government that distinguished his uncle, the late King of Spain. Had the succession been ordered differently, and in my view more in the interests of the people, Don Philip, Duke of Parma, would have assumed the crown of the Sicilies when his eldest brother, Carlos, relinquished it to ascend the throne of Spain. Under that branch of the Spanish royal house, Naples would now be as prosperous and progressive as she was during the rule of his late Catholic Majesty, Carlos III."

"Doubtless the Hereditary Prince is inexperienced," Sir William suavely responded, "but when his time comes to assume the Crown I am confident he will comport himself every whit as well as His Majesty, King Ferdinand."

"Exactly my opinion," the Spaniard concurred.

The black stallions raced on, scattering stones, dust and flecks of foam. Shrines and vineyards, tall poplars and scrawny olive trees succeeded each other in flashing streaks. Peasants, carrying on their backs deep, funnel-like baskets filled with grapes, cowered against the walls; a mongrel bitch, hit by a flying stone, limped howling through a gateway.

The *Chargé d'Affaires* again raised his voice above the noise of rapid progress. "It may interest you to know that on the night of July the 3rd a British attack was made on Cadiz. We suffered some losses, but yours were heavy, and included Rear-Admiral Nelson, who was killed by a shot from one of our gun-boats."

"Are you sure?" Sir William demanded.

"Does it surprise you? The audacity of that little officer has made him a marked man, and I for one am not sorry that his luck deserted him."

Emma gave no sign that she had heard. She looked straight ahead, watching two lines of poplars rushing to meet her from a point in the far distance. The beat of hoofs grew louder, and seemed to strike the air about her ears, the landscape became wide and unfriendly—a strange, lonely vista that tolerated Emma Hamilton because she was nobody. . . . 'Twas the valiant, the challengers of life, who were brought to early graves. . . . Courtiers were permitted to cut capers until ancient limbs danced with the palsy. . . .

The avenue parted and revealed the settlement of San Leucio, a-flutter with bunting for the royal birthday. . . . Coaches and fine carriages were ranged round the small *piazza*, noblewomen dressed like shepherdesses and *cavalieri serventi* masquerading as rustic swains strolled in the gardens of the King's *casino*. Workmen from the factory, wearing their picturesque uniform, toiled at a winch revolving wooden riding-horses for the pleasure of their betters, and loaded pistols to be fired at a Turk's head. As the Spanish *Chargé d'Affaires* brought his horses to a standstill the Queen's *Grand Maître* hurried to meet Emma.

"You are late," he said accusingly; "you keep the company waiting. The Hereditary Prince is in place for the *Menuet de la Cour*. His English Royal Highness the Prince Augustus Frederick stands with the Princess Maria Christina—they wait; everybody waits!" Grumbling and stumping with his stick, the old Duca d'Andria hastened back to the ballroom.

Stepping to the ground, Sir William followed him. "We had an accident," he shouted, "quite unavoidable. . . ."

With his shapely, olive-skinned hand Don Josef de Bouligny caught Emma's arm. "My Lady, after you have opened the ball you will dance with me—the Tarantella. I'll warrant no fawn could pursue his nymph more ardently than I, and my embraces will be closer than you are used to. . . ."

Turning upon him, she dug her nails into his hand. "Have done! D'you think I'd dance with a Spaniard—an enemy?" Before he had time to collect his wits she sped into Sant' Elena.

Fêtes, gala performances at the opera, balls, concerts and illuminations continued to be supplied as an anodyne by the Court.

"But with all this I cannot see many gay faces," Sir William reported on his return from a *ridotto* at Portici. Suffering from a high fever, Emma had taken to her bed the day after the Prince's fête; she had been blooded nine times in an equal number of days, and undergone blistering and other discipline, yet she remained in an excited state.

"Is there no news?" she wistfully inquired.

"I fear none that is pleasant. The Pope has had another narrow escape, but having remained some time with little sign of life, is recovered and gone to his devotions at St. Peter's as usual. An even sadder circumstance is a seven per cent. loss on a bank bill for three thousand ducats which I cashed this morning."

"That's worse than ever, Sir Will'um!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Things are not improving; in most parts of Europe there is a great scarcity of money, and the chief currency is in paper. Since February, when the Bank of England stopped its payments in specie, one cannot complain of small countries. If one does, one is reminded of Mr. Pitt's Bank Restriction Bill!"

The Captain of a Jersey privateer, lately operating off Morocco, was the first to bring intelligence of a British attempt to storm Santa Cruz, repelled with serious loss to the attacking forces.

"Though the account is unfortunate in the extreme, it at least dispels de Bouligny's mischievous report of Admiral Nelson's death. The gallant Sir Horatio himself led the attack on Santa Cruz, and in so doing lost his right arm. 'Twould have been his life too, but for the bravery and presence of mind of Lieutenant Nisbet."

Emma cried out in horror, "Oh, God, then he's a cripple, and can fight no more for England."

"I have no details, but the lack of an arm does not render a man of Admiral Nelson's quality any less valuable to his country. After attention and rest at home, I think his flag will again be a menace to the King's enemies."

"When do you suppose we can visit England, Sir Will'um?"

"I cannot think of going while Prince Augustus Frederick remains and the situation is so critical."

The articles of the Emperor's peace with the French Republic did not give any satisfaction to the Neapolitan Court when it became known that Mantua was to remain with a French garrison. The Emperor surrendered the Austrian Netherlands, the Ionian Islands and extensive territories in Italy, receiving Venice in return. He

acknowledged the independence of the Cisalpine Republic and acquiesced in the incorporation with it of duchies of Modena and Mantua, Massa, Carrara, Bergamo, Brescia, Bologna, Ferrara and Romagna.

"The sacrifice has at least gained us a respite," Queen Carolina groaned. "General Buonaparte has returned to Paris and is being fêted as the 'Pacificator'!"

Emma laughed despite herself. "'Tis like it was two years ago when Spain acclaimed Manuel de Godoy 'Prince of the Peace' for the base part he played against us in effecting the Treaty of Basle."

"Even truth wears a false face for the French Republic!"

Every effort was made by the Court of Naples to foster among the people a sense of security based upon the numerous treaties entered into by the Directory. "The Sicilies should be safe now," anxious patriots assured each other. "There's our Pact of Paris, and the Pope's Peace of Tolentino; now comes the Emperor's turn with the Treaty of Campo Formio. 'Tis a good sign that Napoleon Buona-parté has gone back to Paris; he's got all he wanted, so we can look forward to 1798 being a year of tranquillity."

Sir William thought otherwise. "The country is certainly in a critical situation, full of discontent and ripe for revolution, waiting only for support which seems to be approaching by the rapid increase of the Italian Republic. However, as His Majesty is able to forget burdens of state in the pleasures of the *chasse*, I shall follow his example, remembering that I grow no younger and my days of strenuous sport must be limited."

Emma received the news apathetically. It was no longer necessary to simulate excitement over the numbers of wild boars, wolves and stags that were slain. . . . After living together twelve years, she and Sir Will'um acted natural. . . .

"When I recall the wild, giddy girl that I was I can hardly believe I'm the same person," she informed her mother. "I often feel ashamed of the things I did—though they was never bad, only thoughtless. I've much to be thankful for. Security is what every woman wants, isn't it, Mam?" Her voice had an anxious ring.

Surveying her daughter over the top of her spectacles, Mrs. Cadogan replied: "Yes, and don't you forget it, gall! History can point to humble maids who became 'My Lady', but not to many that were looked up to as you are. None, I'll warrant, gained the friendship of a proud Queen."

"My place at this Court is certainly very extraordinary," Emma concurred in satisfied tones. But even the contemplation of grandeur failed to give zest to the dull routine of achievement. Every difficulty was overcome, every lesson mastered. Emma's voice was trained to perfection, she spoke French and Italian far better than her native tongue, her knowledge of German and Spanish was sufficient for conversation. "If I'd become a *prima donna*, I wonder if I'd have been happier?"

"Of course not." Mrs. Cadogan was decisive. "'Twouldn't have suited you to draggle over the Continent going from one dirty opera-house to another, changing lovers as often as engagements. And it wouldn't have suited *me*!"

"Lovers!" Emma repeated on a soft, questioning note. "I can't somehow think of myself with a lover, though there's some as still cast sheep's eyes at me. I've been wed so long, and since Sir Will'm has suffered from bilious fevers, he's more father than husband."

"That's what I don't like, gall!"

In January the Government of Naples was called upon to take precautions against threats levelled by God and by man. Plague had broken out in Corsica and an insurrection in Rome. This last event gave Emma a new English friend: Miss Cornelia Knight, author of *Dinarbas*, and *Marcus Flaminius: a View of the Military, Political and Social Life of the Romans*. These works, written in a stately classical style, had given Miss Knight a considerable reputation among men and women of taste.

"But when I called she talked as easy as possible, and nobody would take her for a Blue Stocking," Emma reported.

"Cornelia and Lady Knight have plenty to say for themselves," Sir William agreed, "but as neither gives way to the other, I am often put to some embarrassment which to answer."

"What they describe of the riots in Rome is so interesting that you won't wish to interrupt."

Twenty-two years of continental wandering had developed self-confidence in Lady Knight proportionate to the situations she had met and surmounted. She was squab and brisk, her sunburnt face was netted on the cheeks with fine veins that, from a distance, imparted a ruddy look of youth. Having regard for economy and service, she dressed in black, reserving all embellishment for her white hair, which she crêped and curled and frequently singed a dingy yellow through recklessness with the pinching-irons. Cornelia's tall figure was acquir-

ing the comfortable curves of middle-age. She possessed elegant feet and hands and pretty, silky brown hair banded into a Grecian knot. Her face was long and so was her nose; in these characteristics she resembled her father, Sir Joseph Knight, who in 1775 died a Rear-Admiral of the White.

On the day following upon Emma's call, Lady Knight and her daughter dined at Palazzo Sessa. "What changes since we last saw dear Naples!" the dowager alertly exclaimed. "I never thought this disgusting *égalité* would be popular here, yet this morning in the Villa I counted a score of cropped heads and as many pairs of bushy whiskers. Ferdinando should exclude such injurious notions from his little jewel of a kingdom, or he'll find himself an *émigré* with nowhere to run."

"Dear Mama, you ask the impossible! The false theories of French philosophers float like thistledown on the wind, carrying seeds to propagate where they fall."

"You like to appear the clever one, Cornelia, but I can cap you! The idea of 'liberty' for everybody was not born in Paris at all, but in America, and was brought back by those treacherous French officers who went to aid the settlers in revolt against our gracious Sovereign."

Lady Knight did not admit that Cornelia's intelligence outclassed her own, and to substantiate the fact, stoutly contested any opinion of her daughter's. A relationship so competitive offered few openings for the views of outsiders.

Emma seized an opportunity. "Do tell Sir Will'um of the battle you saw raging outside the French Minister's house in Rome."

"The day General Duphot was shot by one of the Pope's soldiers?" Lady Knight made a gesture to prevent Cornelia taking the cue. "Our apartments exactly faced the French Legation, and very interesting we found it, watching the constant stream of people passing in and out of Palazzo Corsini. On this special day we entertained to dinner the Princess Santa Croce—or was it the Duchess de Bracciano, Corri?"

"Neither, Mama. It was Mrs. Jenkins!"

"Ah, yes, to be sure! The banker's wife! Well, it doesn't signify, we *were* entertaining, and sat round the table eating dessert, when suddenly we heard a rush of feet and shouting in the *piazza*. 'What can that be?' I said to my daughter. 'Go you to the *finestra* and see, my dear.' She did so and cried out: 'A crowd of people wearing

French cockades are flying before the Pope's soldiers, who drive them towards the French Minister's. Monsieur Buonaparte comes out upon the balcony, and with him General Duphot.' At that moment a shot rang out, my daughter screamed . . ."

"I did nothing of the kind, Mamal!" Miss Knight crossly retorted.

"Then if I am wrong, Cornelia," Lady Knight icily responded, "what did you do?"

"I told you that an officer, by imprudently ordering his men to fire, had caused the death of General Duphot and supplied an excuse for the French Directory to plunder Rome."

"Well, that hasn't occurred yet, though I thought you might be right when Joseph Buonaparte ordered his horses and furniture to be sold and he drove off in a post-coach!"

"To a rendezvous with General Canclaux in Florence!" Sir William supplemented. "Upon learning of the disturbances in Rome, General Canclaux, French Minister at this Court, vacated his post without warning, leaving the First Secretary as *Chargé d'Affaires*. Unfortunately Monsieur Trouve has not a conciliatory character, and only increases the existing tension."

"Is he that horrible man who goes clanking about with boots and a curved sword to glare at everyone through dirty spectacles?" Lady Knight inquired.

Emma laughed and clapped her hands. "That's him to the life! And you cannot believe how insulting he is to Their Majesties. Last month on the King's birthday there was the usual gala and hand-kissing at the palace, when foreign Ministers pay their court. Monsieur Trouve was the only diplomat who didn't attend, but afterwards he and the other Legation Secretaries occupied their box at the opera. While the rest of us wore our best, they were undressed and without powder, and the only ones that kept their seats when the royal family stood up between acts!"

"Furthermore," said Sir William, negligently dusting flecks of snuff from his sleeve, "they had with them two of the most common and noted women of the town!"

Emma glanced doubtfully towards the guests. "I didn't like to tell that, Sir Will'um!"

Her look was challenged by Lady Knight. "Oh, I'm not squeamish, Madame; I call a spade a spade!"

After trying the 'Crocelle Inn' and quarrelling with the proprietor over his Jacobin sentiments, Lady Knight decided to pay more than

she could afford for apartments adjoining those occupied by Prince Augustus in the Hotel Britannia. Their balcony looked upon the Corso and across a public walk near the seashore; obliquely they glimpsed the Royal Duke wrapped in rugs convalescing in the sun after a severe attack of asthma.

Twice a week Cornelia and her mother entertained a party of English ladies who came to make charpic and bandages out of linen sheets supplied by Emma. "When Mama told the Marchese di Gallo we were preparing for the wounded, he thought us mad," said Cornelia, adroitly rolling a bandage under the palm of her hand. "Mama assured him that the French only await an opportunity to march upon the Sicilies, and casualties must follow if the Neapolitans resist. But this Court and Government seem so unmoved that I for one doubt their intentions."

"The Queen at least is not easy nor blind to the danger," Emma stoutly answered. "Where she would act, the King and his Ministers confer. Would you believe it? The Cabinet sat in council from noon yesterday till four o'clock this morning!"

"Whatever was they talking about?" Mrs. Græffer asked wonderingly.

"My dear Carry, I wasn't a fly on the wall!" Emma impatiently retorted. "Though I can guess they discussed how to avoid any policy likely to provoke the French, who are entering Rome."

"Oh, Emma, you've known all afternoon the City had fallen, yet never told us!" came a chorus of reproach.

"I thought maybe you'd heard, for 'tis common knowledge. Three days ago twenty thousand troops were at Macerata, and forty carts reached Rome loaded with stolen plate, church furniture and other costly things for safe storage in Castel Sant' Angelo, which is provisioned for a siege."

"How terrible! And where's the Pope? Is he dead?" Lady Knight demanded.

"He seems to revive on danger—him and the Cardinals are expected to retire to Benevento."

Carry Græffer began to cry. Weeping drove the colour from her cheeks into her nose, which became a flaming pink. "'Tis all very well for you ladies who've got money to get away with, but what's to become of me and the children if the Frenchies come? We have nothing but Mr. Græffer's salary from the King, and if Naples becomes a Republic, a royal gardener won't be wanted."

"You'll have to go home—if you can find the means," Mrs. Denis briskly assured her. "God knows how, as the way is quite cut off, unless you can swim to England!"

"I shall tell the King he is responsible for me!" Carry answered with returning complacency as she mopped her tears.

"And no doubt he is!" Elena Denis commented as she walked home with Emma. Elena was a tall, handsome brunette, the bride of Simon Alexandre Denis, a Flemish artist who had lately exchanged the patronage of Lord Bristol to become Court painter to King Ferdinando. Elena had a fine contralto voice which blended charmingly with Emma's soprano. "And we are real friends as well," Emma informed Sir William, "that's more than I could say of many women here who pretend to like me."

"*Felicitas habet multos amicos*," the Minister murmured absently as he read a letter from Sir John Acton. Shrugging his shoulders, Sir William dropped the closely written sheet. "Well, history is making rapid strides. The French army and the Roman people are now in perfect harmony and in full revolution burning and destroying all the arms and inscriptions of the Pope, to whom nothing is left but his ecclesiastical power."

"Didn't the Papal soldiers put up a fight?"

"On the contrary—no blood was shed. General Berthier and about twelve thousand men entered Rome on the 10th and took possession of the castle, the gates, the high grounds, and planted a Tree of Liberty. All monuments and works of art were appropriated; the Pope's troops were disarmed and disbanded, the Civic Guard alone was left to do duty with the French."

"I suppose secret agents spread the doctrine of equality, liberty and the rights of man until the people was persuaded that the French soldiers came as saviours."

"Exactly, my dear! We shall very soon see the process repeated in Naples unless this Government abandons its policy of half-measures. Evidently with a view to encourage a rising here, Berthier has ordered ten thousand infantry and a large train of artillery to join him at Rome. This truly alarms the King and General Acton, so I hope speedy and drastic action is contemplated. But we cannot count on a moment's security, and I wish Prince Augustus was out of the kingdom."

"Surely even Buonaparte wouldn't dare touch him?"

"I shouldn't care to rely on it—many important Romans have been

taken as hostages. If the situation becomes critical I must ask this Court's assistance in getting His Royal Highness to safety."

Accounts of additional penalties levied upon the Vicar of Christ spread fresh dismay in Naples. Six million Roman *scudi* and three thousand remounts for the cavalry must be supplied within thirty days. On the night of February the 23rd still graver news was brought to Palazzo Reale by Cardinal York, a fugitive still covered with dust from the Roman Campagna.

"The Pontiff's agreement to every harsh condition did not exhaust General Berthier's demands," Cardinal York's weary voice informed Their Sicilian Majesties. "His Holiness was then called upon to make a final and vital renouncement—his temporal authority."

"He didn't comply?" Apprehension raised Ferdinando's tones to the treble clef.

"His Holiness refused, and as a consequence is a prisoner travelling under escort to Siena!"

"How dared they?" cried Queen Carolina, interrogating the ceiling for an answer from heaven.

"Your Majesty, I also looked upward for divine intervention, but no sign was given, unless it was the insensibility that descended upon the Pontiff as he was carried to the coach."

It was long past midnight and very cold. In the centre of a reception-room flames from two candles created a wavering nimbus which revealed the King and Queen's startled expressions and the exhausted face of Henry Clement Stuart, "Duke of York" and Cardinal Bishop of Frascati. The younger son of the Old Pretender, and the last male representative of the Royal Stuarts, Cardinal York maintained his right to the British Crown as Henry IX of Great Britain, France and Ireland. He was seventy-three, and after twenty-six hours of travel in a ramshackle two-wheeled chaise, looked little like a King and utterly unlike a Cardinal.

"We all appeared very strange, Miledi," the Queen said next day when describing the scene to Emma. "I wore a red-flannel bandage for the face-ache and my old fur-lined travelling-cloak over my night-sack; His Majesty had flung a hunting-coat across his shoulders and carried a pair of pistols, for we both thought the midnight summons was a warning of revolution."

"We have feared one so long that I would welcome an insurrection that could be combated; 'tis waiting passive for others to act that I can't abide," Emma said energetically. "Coming along I counted

no less than fifteen French cockades worn by Your Majesty's subjects, and as I crossed the *largo* who should I see but the Cavaliere Caracciolo wearing whiskers and long breeches!"

"And no powder!" added Queen Carolina; "but where he's concerned the fashion has no significance save a natural preference for slovenly dress. No one is more loyal to us than Francesco Caracciolo—you've heard he's been made a Baillif of Malta by Baron de Hompesch, the new Grand Master?"

"The Cavaliere sent cards announcing the honour to all the Foreign Ministers; it makes it more surprising one so proud would wear the tokens of a Jacobin."

"I assure you, Miledi, he adopts the ugly whiskers because they are a new fashion—a novelty. Although Francesco is forty-six, he is just the same impulsive boy that I remember when I came from Vienna thirty years ago—then I called him my *cavaliere servente*, for he is but a few months older than I, Miledi, and in those first lonely weeks I will confess his friendship touched my heart."



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MARCH and April were rendered increasingly uneasy by accounts of French preparations for invasion of the Sicilies. Substantial reinforcements had joined the army across the frontier, a secret expedition was fitting out at Genoa, a squadron of French and Venetian warships, loaded heavily with spoils from Italy, were in the Gulf of Spezia. Various explanations of these threatening manifestations issued from the French Legation. Great Britain, Sardinia and Malta were cited as objectives. It was stressed that intentions towards the Sicilies were entirely pacific, assurances that failed to satisfy the Court and Government.

"I clearly perceive that the King and General Acton, discovering themselves mistaken in trusting to the generosity and good faith of Madrid and the French Republic now turn their thoughts to Britain," Sir William dryly observed.

"All along the Queen has counselled friendship with England, but her good advice is ignored since the King took to politics and the Prime Minister shifted his camp. You know, Sir Will'um, those two have never mended their quarrel over the Prince de Saxe. The Queen blames General Acton for the Prince nearly drowning in the Adriatic."

"And the Prime Minister has never forgiven Her Majesty for catholic tastes!"

The new trend of Neapolitan policy was made plain during an official visit from Sir John Acton.

"I come to talk frankly, my dear Sir, to lay myself at your feet as the representative of His Britannic Majesty."

"As you know, my esteemed friend, I am always at your service and ever the humble servant of Their Sicilian Majesties," Sir William suavely rejoined.

General Acton's wooden visage wore an anxious look as he faced the British Envoy. "Did you know that some five weeks ago, through our Ambassador, we demanded of King George protection and a powerful defence to save our valuable ports and country from falling into the hands of the Republic?"

"I was not informed of it; but I have received no dispatches from my Government for a considerable time."

"The Sicilies are practically beleaguered, the French command all roads. Doubtless that is why I get no answer from the Marchese Circello."

"Doubtless!" Sir William blandly returned.

"My dear Sir, we find ourselves in a frightful position: the French are bringing troops from their places in Piedmont, and the Milanese; even soldiers from the Roman State have the Two Sicilies for their destination. The squadron at Spezia, with the men-of-war embarking troops at Toulon, make a fleet of nineteen Ships of the Line and nine frigates ready to cover an attack on our coasts. At our demand to know the destination of these expeditions we received from the French generals most friendly assurances that the preparations were intended for Portugal and Gibraltar, and certainly not for the Two Sicilies."

Sir William idly swung from his finger a quizzing-glass on a black riband; as it moved in the sunlight it cast dazzling flashes discomfiting to the eyes of the Neapolitan Prime Minister. Though General Acton blinked at every flicker, he made no effort to avoid annoyance, but sat stiffly with legs and forearms crossed, a characteristic attitude resembling skulful trussing. Sir William appeared slightly bored as he watched the glass and made it swing a little faster.

"You seem ungrateful, Acton, considering the French Republic has been at some pains to allay foreboding."

"Until our courier arrived this morning from Paris we were cheerful, though the position was not entirely to our liking. He brought letters in a different tone that revived our suspicions of bad intentions. We are offered Benevento, provided we pay a *large sum sufficient to satisfy the Directory for such a present*; and given warning that a refusal, or even a delay in accepting the proposal, will put in motion the former resolution of republicanizing all Italy! Toulon, Genoa and Civita Vecchia, we are informed, are preparing means to execute such a project."

Sir William's eyebrows went up. "In fact, the message from Paris

is exactly in the language of our highwaymen—'Deliver your money or I will blow your brains out'."

"Ah! Now you appreciate, my dear Sir, that this Monarchy is threatened with complete and immediate destruction."

"It has long been evident to me that when they can, the French will take all they can, in this and every other part of the world."

"We are doing our utmost to put the country in a good state of defence, but our position is most perilous unless we receive outside aid. At the urgent request of Their Majesties I am desired to inquire if you would take on yourself to acquaint Lord St. Vincent of our position? And of our demands for protection, made since five weeks to His Britannic Majesty?"

"Anxious as I am to assist Their Majesties at all times, I doubt if my best endeavours could alter the situation at this moment. However willing Lord St. Vincent might be to comply with Their Majesties' request, I am persuaded that the danger threatening Great Britain would prevent his moving without absolute orders from London."

"Their Majesties observe the critical times for all Europe and the threats of an invasion even in England, but a diversion in these parts might operate advantageously for the common good. Will England see all Italy, and even the Two Sicilies, in the French hands with indifference?"

"My Royal Master has always shown himself solicitous for the safety of these Kingdoms, and doubtless the appeals already addressed to him through the proper channels will receive his consideration and support."

"But there is no time to be lost if these ports, so valuable to Great Britain in the prosecution of the war, are to be saved. Do, my dear Sir, acquaint Lord St. Vincent of our dangerous position!"

"By what means?"

"The British Privateer *Terrible*, now in this port, is a fast-sailing vessel. His Majesty authorizes me to pay any sum asked for taking your dispatch to His Lordship!"

Sir William thoughtfully swung his quizzing-glass; eventually he looked at the General and spoke deliberately. "If I do this, will ye oblige me in return?"

"My dear Sir, anything shall be done that is within my power!"

"'Tis nothing so very difficult!" Sir William airily responded. "Ye

must know that the safety of the Prince Augustus Frederick is causing me some uneasiness, particularly in view of the news you have just given me. Now if you, my dear Acton, will assist in conveying His Royal Highness from Manfredonia to Trieste, the only door open to his retreat, you will do me a favour, and, incidentally, further the claims of Their Sicilian Majesties upon the protection of Britain!"

"A Neapolitan ship of war shall be at your command."

"Done!" cried Sir William, jumping up. "Now we'll seal our agreement with wine!"

After the guest departed Sir William put on his hat, and, crossing the courtyard, sauntered down the *vico* to the flight of steps that descended to the Chiatamone. He went in search of Emma, who, with Cornelia Knight, was sketching Vesuvius from Castel dell' Uovo. It was a lovely spring day, fragrant with flowers abloom in the terraced gardens of the Pizzofalcone. Walking along the marina, Sir William looked up at crimson roses tumbling in cascades over walls and balustrades, at banks of yellow and orange azaleas, at tall magnolia trees with big, waxy flowers like water-lilies floating on the turquoise sky. Turning the point at the Royal Villa, he could see the two artists on the causeway that connected Castel dell' Uovo with the mainland. Sitting on small wooden stools, they worked on sketch-books propped against indents of a battlemented wall. Cornelia Knight looked safe enough on her fragile perch, but Emma, who was growing Junoesque, appeared most precariously balanced.

"My dear love, you should tell one of the lackeys to bring down a chair," Sir William solicitously remarked as he looked for a place to sit down. After trying one or two gaps in the parapet he abandoned the idea and, with his back to Vesuvius, leant against the wall. "I wish I did credit to good living, as you do, Em; but my bilious complaint causes me to become thinner and thinner, until I resemble a religious ascetic from the East Indies."

"That's more agreeable than being a fat woman! I know I'm getting buxom, Sir Will'um, but 'tis cruel to keep reminding me, for God knows I can't forget I'm bursting out of all my clothes and my stays are so wide laced they're scarce any use."

"You must deny yourself more at table, my dear!"

"But I do love good food and wines, Sir Will'um!"

"Never mind, you are tall enough to bear a little extra weight—and there are many who think Hera more desirable than Aphrodite!"

"Fie, Sir Will'um! Do you think I'm looking for a lover?"

Noticing that Cornelia appeared embarrassed by marital flippancies, Sir William said: "I've just come from striking a bargain with General Acton; I felt no compunction, as I am so frequently the victim of his secret diplomacy."

"I'm glad you're revenged at last," Emma observed with satisfaction, "for Sir John's no straighter than a corkscrew."

"I would not say that," Sir William judiciously answered: "a Prime Minister cannot lay his cards on the table, but Acton has often been guilty of misleading me more than was necessary in the interests of the Two Sicilies. Particularly over the peace negotiations with France."

"Tell us how you managed to overreach him, Sir Will'um!"

"By granting a favour and asking one, *quid pro quo*. The French Directory openly threaten an invasion of these Kingdoms with the armament preparing at Toulon, and as it is natural for a person in danger of drowning to catch at every twig, the greatest hopes this Government entertains of being saved is by the protection of the British fleet under Lord St. Vincent. I have agreed to send an express to His Lordship explaining the critical situation."

"But where is your advantage?"

"In return for exerting any influence I possess, General Acton promises to send a Neapolitan warship to convey Prince Augustus from Manfredonia to Trieste. I need not tell you what a load this lifts from my mind."

"Will His Royal Highness go?"

"*Can* he go?" Miss Knight's tone was fatidic.

Surprised, Emma and Sir William looked at her. "Are ye aware of any obstacle?" the Minister inquired.

"Mama and I have discussed whether to mention the matter or not, as we felt uncertain if you were already informed. But as you seem to anticipate no difficulties, I think 'tis my duty to warn you that His Royal Highness is in danger of arrest for debts incurred here and in Rome."

"God bless my soul! It can't be true, or I should have heard of it."

"I fear, Sir, there is no mistake. It is not strange that you are in ignorance, as I believe His Royal Highness succeeds in concealing his pecuniary embarrassment even from his own suite—I am sure neither Count Munster nor Mr. Tatter are in his confidence."

"Then how, Cornelia, did you and Lady Knight learn the secret?"

"We first heard of the debts in Rome from Eustacchio, the guitar

master who gave His Royal Highness lessons. The poor man was in great need of 150 Roman crowns owing to him, and came to ask Mama how he could get the Prince to pay. She was unable to advise. Afterwards we heard of other debts, large sums advanced by Monsieur de Vaux and the Pope. Since coming to Naples we have learnt of bills that are only settled by further purchases. Pieralli, the proprietor of our hotel, is greatly concerned over nearly 1200 ducats owing for the Prince's apartments and for the hire of carriages and horses for which Pieralli has already paid."

"You shock me!" said Sir William feebly.

"I hope I have not done wrong in mentioning the matter?"

"I am much obliged, my dear Cornelia—but don't allow it to get abroad, or my difficulties will be considerably increased."

Miss Knight looked offended; she rose and began to pack up her painting materials and a really charming picture of Vesuvius and the bay. "I am an Admiral's daughter," she said coldly, "and not in the habit of circulating information concerning the private affairs of others—least of all when my Sovereign's interests are involved!"

Embarrassed and contrite, Sir William impulsively grasped her arm.

"My dear Miss Knight! I assure you nothing was further from my mind than to impute indiscretion. I know ye are the soul of caution and honour."

Mollified, but still slightly affronted, she answered: "You might have reflected, Sir William, that Mama and I have known of the debts for months."

"The deuce ye have!" Sir William conceded.

Emma began to laugh. "I declare you are foolish, the pair of you, arguing about a secret that must be known from one end of Naples to the other. The King and General Acton are too polite to mention the Prince's debts to you, Sir Will'um, but 'tis certain they know of them through the *giunta*, if in no other way."

"Ye are right, my dear, as usual," Sir William ruefully admitted.

Dropping his elbows on the parapet, he looked across glassy blue water to the arsenal and the dockyard, to the frowning towers of Castel Nuovo and to the pepper-pot lighthouse on the elbow of Molo Grande. He saw a rowing-boat with a bright awning emerge from the *darsena* and head towards a British privateer at anchor off Immacolatella. "General Acton intends to lose no time," Sir William reported

"Why is he going?" Emma demanded in surprise. "Privateers aren't much in favour unless flying French colours, when they do as they please right under the guns of the forts."

"*Force majeure*, my dear Em. But in visiting a British pirate, Acton does so in his own interests, for 'tis by the *Terrible* carrying his letter and one of mine to Gibraltar that he hopes to secure Lord St. Vincent's powerful protection for the Two Sicilies."

Standing beside Sir William, Emma and Miss Knight watched the gaily painted boat ferrying the wooden-looking Prime Minister towards the black hull of the brig. As he drew close he hailed the ship, but got no answer. The vessel appeared deserted save for a yellow mongrel barking and snarling at the gang-port. Finding his shouts unavailing, General Acton grasped the rope ladder and began gingerly to climb towards the dog waiting in a frenzy to receive him.

"Come along, Em," Sir William laughed. "I don't want to see our good friend bitten, and perhaps discouraged, the moment he embarks on firm measures."

The possibility that a British fleet might again operate in Italian waters raised Emma's spirits. Walking home along the Chiatamone between her husband and Miss Knight, she paid no heed to their conversation. Parting company at the *rampa*, she and Sir William slowly mounted the steep, worn steps. The stairs were an accredited place for novenas; pedestrians had to skirt suppliants muttering prayers as they ascended on their knees. Dedicated to the *Sacro Cuore di Gesù*, the steps had acquired a spiritual connexion with Pope Pius VI, who had especially approved formal devotion to the Heart of Jesus and bestowed numerous indulgences in its favour. Persons who shunned public invocation conquered prejudice in order to aid, through this special means, the unfortunate Pontiff. Emma and Sir William, cautiously climbing between suppliants, recognized men and women of the first rank kneeling beside beggars and *lazzaroni*.

On attaining Vico Santa Maria, Sir William glanced significantly at Emma. "Did ye notice?"

"Though she's heavily veiled, I knew the shoes, and Princess Amélie had on the little crucifix ring she always wears."

"Did ye also observe Prince Belmonte Pignatelli just behind the Queen?"

"Yes, I saw him—and why shouldn't he be hurting his knees along with the other Catholics if he thinks it any help to the Pope?" Re-

senting Sir William's quizzical glance, Emma took his hand and gave it a little slap. "Yes, I know what you think, but I don't believe there's aught wrong in Her Majesty's liking young men, and old ones, too, for that matter. If a woman has friendships gossips talk evil at once, yet none raise a whisper against Ferdinando, though all know how the charmingly furnished summer-houses are used in the royal *boschetti*."

"What a partisan you are, Em; but I like ye the better for it."

Gently Sir William took Emma's arm and made her turn to look back at the view. At such a height they looked over the dome of Santa Maria to the bay and the shadowy blue islands of Procida, Ischia and Capri. Two Neapolitan 74's lay at anchor off Portici, a frigate manœuvred round the Immacolatella to enter Porto Grande; not one of Ferdinando's ships of war displayed any interest in three French privateers chasing a Maltese *speronara* racing for harbour.

"She'll just manage to round the fort in time," Sir William announced, "but it is really a scandal that those French rascals should be allowed to hover about this bay as they do."

"My God, how quick a British Admiral would send them to the bottom!"

"It is part of the contemptuous treatment accorded to weak States by a nation in arms."

"Do you think Lord St. Vincent will send a fleet to aid the Sicilies?"

"I doubt it when I consider the necessary occupation of the King's fleets for the defence of Great Britain. Though one would imagine the Republic have their hands full, there is no end to the ambition of tyrants, and it is quite conceivable that the enormous preparations going on at Toulon have England or Ireland as their object."

"If a British fleet was sent here, who do you suppose would command it?" Emma persisted. "D'you think Sir Horatio Nelson would be chosen?"

Sir William answered emphatically: "Most unlikely—he's probably still unfit to go to sea."

Emma and her husband resumed their slow climb up the hill. Presently she asked in a voice that was elaborately casual, "After Prince Augustus is safe, shall we be able to go home ourselves?"

"I certainly consider myself free to claim leave granted full ten months ago; but at this moment I am more concerned over the affairs of His Royal Highness than I am over my own. Cornelia Knight is

not a woman to make idle accusations, and I fully expect that the Prince's financial plight is graver than she implied."

"You'll have to tell the King?"

"I shall! And His Majesty unfortunately can hardly yet be reconciled to the Prince of Wales's last debts of £370,000, paid off by Parliament two years ago. 'Tis the constant misfortune of our Hanoverian monarchs to breed unruly, obstinate and often profligate sons."

"There's little wrong with Prince Augustus except silliness," said Emma, "and I daresay that comes from the way he was brought up, for indeed childhood at Windsor seemed to be dull and joyless enough to make anyone eager for extravagances. What sort of a life had King George as a boy at Leicester House?"

"Plaguily dull, my dear, as I know from sharing much of it with him. Our chief diversion was a round game called Comet played by George's mother, the Princess of Wales, Princess Augusta, Edward, myself and such members of the household as could be pressed to take part; there were theatricals, too, over-supervised by the Earl of Bute for my liking. He fancied himself as an actor; he certainly possessed a handsome person and symmetrical legs, which he was fond of admiring in a long mirror on the drawing-room wall. 'Lothario', in *The Fair Penitent*, was his favourite part, a fact alluded to by John Wilkes in a malicious letter publicly addressed to his Lordship."

"Did the Prince of Wales guess that his Duchess and Lord Bute was lovers?"

"Very likely. He had his amours, and probably was quite willing that she should have hers—a complacent attitude not shared by King George II, a libertine who begrudged illicit embraces to others, particularly to his son 'Fed', whom he cordially disliked."

"Your mother was the Prince of Wales's mistress, wasn't she?"

"Who told ye that?" Sir William sharply demanded.

"The Bishop of Derry—he said the Prince and Lady Archibald Hamilton was avowed lovers for years."

"How unnecessary of Lord Bristol to resurrect a long-buried scandal!"

"I'm sorry he did, as it's vexed you, but I saw no harm, as most persons of quality boast of unfaithfulness."

"My dear Emma, to hear you one would suppose you had always been a model of chastity! *A propos* of my mother's connexion with Leicester House—she was for years Mistress of the Robes to the

Princess of Wales, at the same time as my father was Cofferer to His Royal Highness. As they both filled official places in the household, it proves decisively that there was no grounds for Lord Bristol's assumption."

Emma's eyes blazed and she retorted with spirit. "I don't care what they was to each other! They're all dead anyway, and their bodies and what they did with them don't matter any more. If their souls have gone on, maybe they'll know their mates better than they did on earth. But I'm still alive, and I'll thank you, Sir Will'um, to speak less scornful of me; for well you know I've been faithful to you for twelve long years, and little encouragement I get—I might be a nun living in your house for all the attention you pay me!"

"I would reply, Emma, that I am sixty-eight, and I played pretty free with my constitution in my younger days. When you were so anxious to marry me, you should have reflected that the sand in my glass was running out. But what is done is done, and ye must make the best of it without temper."

"I didn't mean to get angry, and I'm sorry, Sir Will'um," Emma said miserably. "Everything goes wrong so sudden, and for no reason at all!"

"Well, I warn ye, I'm getting far too old to endure tantrums!"

In frigid silence they crossed the courtyard, skirting the prone forms of itinerant traders, beggars, mendicant friars and *lazzaroni* sleeping in the shade of the Judas trees. On reaching the vestibule Sir William turned towards his office. "I shall be busy all afternoon writing to Lord St. Vincent, and I desire my dinner to be served in my cabinet."

Due to the exorbitant demands made by the captain of the privateer, the dispatch of Sir William's letter to the flagship off Cadiz was delayed for ten days. In the meantime a Neapolitan 74 and a frigate left Castel-à-Mare for Manfredonia, there to await the Prince Augustus.

"I hope to God His Highness won't be arrested before the ships get round," Sir William sighed.

Emma answered: "I discovered this morning that Carlotta, the washerwoman at Marinella, hasn't been paid these six months."

"Her bill cannot amount to a great deal; 'tis the large creditors who may detain His Royal Highness if they get an inkling that he means to leave the Kingdom."

"Has the Prince mentioned his debts to you?"

"Not a word, but I intend to sound Count Munster on the matter now I am *au fait* with the situation."

"Mr. Smith has been clever to find out so much in a secret way."

"Ah, yes! Poor Smith would have made an admirable spy; he is gifted, or cursed, with a most inquisitive disposition."

Verification of the disclosures made by Miss Knight had been achieved by Sir William's elderly secretary, to whom disagreeable and difficult tasks gravitated as a matter of course. In 1766 Henry Smith came to Palazzo Sessa to fill a gap until someone older and more experienced could be secured. For thirty-two years the temporary nature of the appointment had been stressed by Sir William and humbly endorsed by his admiring employé.

"My engagement may terminate at any moment," Mr. Smith informed visitors. "Being self-educated, I'm not qualified for such a post as this. When I came His Excellency made it clear that I must regard the position as strictly *pro tempore*."

While Emma and Sir William sat talking in the Minister's cabinet, the Secretary poked his head round the door and hastily withdrew it.

"Come in, Smith, come in," Sir William cried. "Ye know I can't bear indecision!"

The opening door revealed the Secretary's long, lank, deprecating figure and shabby, carefully brushed clothes. As he bowed to Emma his pale, colourless eyes beamed in simple affection from his thin, sal-low face.

"I see you've been out," Sir William observed, negligently hooking one leg over the arm of his chair. "Take a pinch of my snuff, Smith—a new brand of Oronoko presented to me by poor Skavronsky's successor, Count Muschin Puschen." Genially he proffered a gold box studded with diamonds, the gift of another Russian, the Grand Duke Paul, to whom Sir William had acted as cicerone on his visit to Naples. "Now, Smith, tell us if ye have obtained any further information."

The violent action of the Russian Minister's snuff temporarily deprived Mr. Smith of speech. When he recovered he gasped through the folds of his handkerchief: "Pietro Cagiati, furrier: Mr. Ennis, tailor (both of Rome), are combining with Borace, the jeweller on the Toledo, and Raymond Piatti, the bankers, to issue warrants for the arrest of His Royal Highness."

"Just as I feared!" Sir William said with the bitter triumph of a vindicated prophet. "Now I shall have to intervene—in fact I have

already written to the Prince's equerry this *bullet*, which you, Smith, will take at once and deliver into the hands of Count Munster."

Sir William's letter came as a bomb to the suite of the Royal Duke: harassed equeries hastened between Palazzo Sessa and the Grande Bretagne; meetings with obdurate creditors were followed by interviews with the Prince.

"My dear fellow, there's no use referring to me! If Bernardo says I owe him three hundred and ninety-seven ducats I don't dispute it—I never keep accounts. He's cooked me a great many good dinners, and I know 'tis a deuce of a time since I gave him any money, simply because I had none!"

"Have you any notion how much you do owe?" Sir William asked

After feeling in his pocket the Prince produced a length of catgut, and a piece of sucked toffee to which adhered a pencilled memorandum. Carefully his chubby fingers detached one from the other. The toffee he popped into his mouth, the sticky slip of paper he handed to Sir William. "I fear the figures are not very clear," he said placidly as he sucked, "my sevens always look like ones, and my threes like eights."

"You do yourself less than justice, Sir, for your totals are extremely clear, and amount together to, approximately, three thousand two hundred and seventeen English pounds."

"Three shillings and fourpence," Prince Augustus added as he detached the toffee from a back tooth.

"You are perfectly correct, Sir! The sum is three thousand and seventeen pounds three shillings and fourpence."

"And I owe quite a lot to His Holiness the Pope, but he won't want to be paid in his present situation."

"At the moment that debt need not be taken into consideration," Sir William spoke absently as he transferred the items on the memorandum to a clean sheet of paper. When he had finished he looked straight at Prince Augustus. "I suppose ye know that some of your creditors threaten arrest, which, according to Neapolitan law, means imprisonment in the Vicaria or an even more obnoxious fortress."

"You'll have to do something about it," the Prince cheerfully rejoined, "for 'tis very certain I can't! You must borrow the money, Sir, in the King's name. There'll be the devil of a dust at Windsor, but they can't blame you for settling what has become a national concern."

"Yes, at this critical moment you are in danger of arrest or of be-

ing taken prisoner by our inveterate enemy. Either misfortune would touch the honour of England."

"Well, there you are!"

Agreement with the Prince's creditors was not so easily achieved. Promises of payment were unacceptable until Sir William added his personal guarantee that, immediately he obtained authority from England, every debt should be discharged by his own banker.

"Having managed so well, no time must now be lost in quitting the kingdom. I hope, Sir, ye will set out post on May the 7th for Manfredonia."

"On Tuesday? How can I be packed in three days when I have enough clothes to fill twenty trunks?"

"I fear ye must leave most of them. The present difficulties of travel strike at all alike."

"Then I shall have a splendid excuse to buy new, and the Viennese tailors are superior to any in Italy."

"In that ye will have to consult Sir Morton Eden."

"Ambassadors are always ten years behind the fashion."

"There I must differ, Sir. In my younger days I was as fine a beau as any to be seen in St. James's."

With the departure of the Royal Duke Sir William was free to consider his own situation, and it brought him little satisfaction. Letters from England had either miscarried or not been written. Not a shilling had found its way from Milford into his account with Ross and Ogilvie; two quarters' salary was lost or forgotten by the British Government; an overdraft was mounting alarmingly at the house of Gibbs and Falconet at Naples. France and General Buonaparte between them had altered, not only the face of Europe, but all Sir William's prudent planning. Vases and pictures acquired for profitable realization in England were rendered immovable, and therefore a loss and an anxiety lest they fell into enemy hands. The British Minister was not deluded by the cessation of French threats.

"If this Government imagine that French ambitions have been satisfied by a large price paid for Benevento, they are doomed to disappointment."

"The Queen says all is designed to stave off invasion until an answer comes from England," said Emma, just returned from the palace.

"They'd be fools to expect anything from the Directory after the speech the new Republican Ambassador made to the King this morn-

ing at his first audience. Six pages he read aloud, bragging of the generosity of the great French nation for giving so good a peace to the Emperor of Germany, and of its magnanimity in having granted a peace to another Power which was by no means in a situation to defend itself. Then he uttered much abusive language against Great Britain."

"An opportunity to humiliate a Bourbon would be agreeable to Monsieur Garat!"

"The Queen declares she won't receive the villain who carried the death sentence to King Louis and attended his execution."

"She will have to—Their Sicilian Majesties are not in a position to make a stand. But it certainly was not civil in the Directory to send Joseph Garat as Ambassador Extraordinary."

Every day fresh accounts reached Naples of merciless French depredations in Rome: churches and galleries were systematically stripped and the plunder dispatched to transports waiting at Civita Vecchia. English artists who had remained in the city were singled out for special persecution, and relieved of everything but their clothes. Expelled from the Roman Republic, they arrived in Naples to concern no one but Sir William, upon whom fell the task of securing new patrons.

In the prevailing congestion a few additional refugees were unnoticed. For two years an increasing tide of homeless people had retreated before the conquering armies of France. Now they could go no farther they halted uneasily, fugitives who had reached, not a sanctuary, but a fortress already beleaguered. Superficially the town was gay. Traders in cheap wines, ices and sweetmeats made money from those who had no other means of passing the time. A great many carriages rolled up and down the Corso di Chiaia; a great many priests and mendicant friars offered benedictions in exchange for largess; a great many new prostitutes appeared on the streets and a great many new beggars sat in the gutters. Fights were frequent between newcomers and Neapolitans established in the same professions—so numerous did casualties become that notices were pasted up warning those who saw dead bodies that they were responsible for disposing of them; an edict that failed in its object. In the Villa gardens, in the Toledo and even under the windows of the palace, men and women confidently wore French cockades and hair cropped *à la Bruto*. The *giunta* was still in being, but it no longer dared to make arrests.

At Caserta the Queen tried to forget tension and danger. To her infinite satisfaction, the Hereditary Princess was pregnant, a happy circumstance that Carolina ascribed as much to Santa Maria delle Salette and to her own prayers as to the Hereditary Prince and his shrinking spouse. "You are happy now because you are securing the Crown of the Sicilies," she told her daughter-in-law. "I waited many years before I was brought to bed; you are more fortunate, because the sooner you accomplish your duty the sooner you will be free to please yourself. Do not have females first, as I did: they are no use in securing the crown, though on their merits daughters are to be preferred. Do you understand, Clementina? Sons first, and then a daughter or two if you choose."

"Must I suffer this often?" Clementina whimpered: "the Sicilies has only one King at a time."

"To be certain of that one you must have sons to spare—'tis only ten years since I lost Gennaro and Carlo from the smallpox."

"*Heilige Mütter Gottes*, how can I bear it?"

"Sometimes you make me angry, Clementina! Haven't you any ambition?"

A means of awakening the Hereditary Princess to pride in her destiny was a matter Maria Carolina often discussed with her English friend.

"Let her see the grandeur of ruling a kingdom," Emma advised. "I don't mean the Courts and ceremonies, but glories like building a fleet and leading it in grand gala to the ports of the northern princes, as Your Majesty did just before I came to Naples."

"Ah, but that four months' tour cost a million ducats—we shall never do that again in my lifetime!"

"No, but the navy you built may fight the Republican fleet preparing at Toulon. Just suppose if the Neapolitan navy was to vanquish the French in a sea battle and so save Europe! If each ship fought like Admiral Nelson's at St. Vincent 'twould not matter that the enemy vessels are treble as many. *That* would be glory! Teach Princess Clementina to expect a great victory, and she'll be proud to bear sons to rule a nation of heroes!"

"Miledi, how you inspire me! As you speak I watch the scene. . . . Each of our ships surrounded by enemy vessels! . . . Smoke! . . . The boom of cannon! . . . Explosions! . . . Fires! . . . French ships flying the infamous tricolour sinking one after the other! . . ."

"All but the Flagship!" cried Emma, "which strikes to the Bailli

Caracciolo. He boards at once and makes his way to the quarter-deck. General Buonaparte waits, not to surrender, but to fight. They set upon each other with their swords; Buonaparte falls. . . .”

“How I like to hear you, Miledi! Your vigour and boldness infuse my flagging spirits with fresh confidence. I see the Sicilies in an honourable rôle, a little nation that by daring can free Europe from the French scourge. Hip, hip, Miledi! Hip, hip!”

Emma was highly elated by her success as instigator and reported the scene to Sir William. “The Queen was fired up by the way I went on, and I think she will now look for a strong commander able to lead the Neapolitans against the French.”

“Do not feel too sanguine because your eloquence has awakened a response in Her Majesty. The Queen was ever the most ready to take vigorous action, and if her scheme had succeeded for uniting all the Italian Powers against the common enemy, the position at this moment might be very different. But she has no longer an irresistible influence over His Majesty, and she has completely lost the support of General Acton. Much application to business has impaired the General’s constitution, and he surrenders to the lethargy and want of decision so prevalent in this climate.”

“Tis strange that none takes warning from the Pope’s fate!”

The Court returned to Naples for the King’s birthday, but it was celebrated without the customary hand-kissing and public banquet, only San Carlo was decorated as usual with triple illuminations. *Le Nozze di Figaro*, a new opera by Portogallo, with “La Tomeoni” in the principal part, was accorded but a tepid reception from a pre-occupied audience. Monsieur Garat and one of his secretaries sat in the box facing the royal *palchetto*. With their rough, cropped, black hair, large spectacles and closely buttoned frocks, they looked exactly like the last Minister and his colleague.

In the interval General Acton leant round the looking glass partition that separated his box from the British Minister’s.

“Sir John, are spectacles a diplomatic etiquette for the new Republic?” Emma maliciously inquired.

“It appears so! Their terrific appearance actually frightens the ladies. This morning I encountered the Ambassador and Monsieur de Sieyès when I was walking with my niece, Mary Anne, in the Villa Reale. She was cruelly terrified, and clutched my arm crying ‘Uncle, be these brigands? If they be, let us run, for I am wearing the pearl cross you gave me, and I have no mind to lose it.’”

"Is your brother arrived from Florence?" Sir William asked in surprise.

"Joseph remains with the Grand Duke, but 'twas thought that Mary Anne would be safer here with the Baroness and myself. Tuscany is overrun with French troops, and Anne, though only twelve years, has a most exquisite little figure." General Acton's stone-grey eyes glittered as his stiff hands, concealed by the balustrade, tremblingly followed the curves of a seductive memory.

"Has Monsieur Garat let fall any hint as to the object of the French armament preparing at Toulon?" said Sir William, dispelling the pleasant vision.

"The Ambassador assures me quite seriously that the expedition, which is commanded by General Buonaparte, is destined for Egypt."

"Do ye believe it?"

General Acton shrugged his shoulders. "It is possible! He tells me the idea is to establish a colony and build a new city on the site of ancient Berenice. Neither did he doubt the ability to put into execution the ancient plan of cutting a canal across the Isthmus of Suez."

"An ambitious programme!"

"Monsieur Garat, observing my disbelief, informed me that the French Republic had never been in so flourishing a situation as at this moment."

"I should think they are," Emma ejaculated, "considering what they've stolen!"

The overture for the second act drowned the Prime Minister's response.

Sir William had not settled on the best means of leaving Naples when he received a dispatch from Lord Grenville transmitted through Sir Morton Eden and the royal courier from Vienna. It announced that His Britannic Majesty had come to the determination of sending a fleet to the Mediterranean for the protection of Naples, which would sail from England with the first fair wind after the beginning of June.

The dispatch was delivered before breakfast, and Sir William brought the document to table and propped it against the coffee-pot to read as he ate. "Having sent off a *bullet* to the Marquis di Gallo, requesting an audience, I must memorize the details before my interview."

"Can't you go direct to Their Majesties?" Emma asked. "The

Marchese is nothing but a dressed-up fool, and nobody counts him as anything else."

"I know—but I must carry on the King's business through the proper and regular channel, which is the Secretary of State, especially as the Marquis di Gallo is extremely jealous of any interference in his department, particularly from General Acton."

"Tell me what's in the dispatch, Sir Will'um," Emma coaxed. "I promise I'll not breathe a word, not even to the Queen, till you say I may."

"His Lordship stresses the conditions under which the fleet is sent, and most reasonable they are. Free and immediate admission is demanded for the fleet, or for any part thereof, into the Neapolitan ports, with the fullest liberty to the Commander to supply himself with every species of provisions, stores, etc. There is a further stipulation that these ports shall be closed to all enemy ships, and commerce between them effectually prohibited. I am instructed to warn this Government that if admission of the fleet to the ports of Naples is not complied with, the Admiral commanding has orders forthwith to quit the Mediterranean and return to British waters."

"Goodness! Seeing the King and Queen have asked for British protection, they could hardly deny the hospitality of their ports to their saviours."

"But ye forget the terms of the pact with France, which enjoins neutrality on the Sicilies and prohibits the admission to her ports of more than four belligerent vessels."

"If Naples asks England to fight for her, 'tis clear the Kingdom is at war too—how else could it be?"

"I agree that to us the problem seems perfectly simple, but to an Italian mind the situation will present a variety of alternatives, each offering advantages outweighing the inevitable consequences of a bold cut with France. Unless I am much mistaken, this Government will attempt to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds."

As he finished speaking, Gaetano brought a note on a salver. Splitting the seals, Sir William hastily scanned it. "Hm-m, this is quite in keeping with my expectations—the Marchese di Gallo is confined to his bed with a severe cold, and therefore regrets that he cannot give me an audience at present. And I informed him of the purport of the visit!"

"The miserable little fop! One would think he'd struggle to his

feet as he were dying, to hear such news. Oh, Sir Will'um," Emma cried, springing up, "can you believe anything so glorious as British men-of-war coming back to the bay? Suppose our ships surprised Buonaparte attacking Naples, then we could watch the battle and perhaps take part in it. Oh, God, Sir Will'um, how can you keep so calm when we may be close to glorious events?" She had placed her hands on his shoulders, and her excited face looked into his. Close proximity to her radiant beauty momentarily recharged Sir William with youthful ardour. He kissed her red lips and gazed into her shining eyes. "My love, how queer it is—and I know I have often remarked it—that when you are exalted, the brown spot on the blue iris seems to expand."

Emma pouted in mock anger. "Lud, Sir Will'um, why do you only notice my blemishes?"

"My darling, it is no blemish, and all men must say so."

The Foreign Minister kept Sir William waiting for three days, and then summoned him to Caserta. No rain had fallen for weeks, and the long, flat road was thick with dust and rendered stifling by the luxuriance of fig plantations festooned with trailing vines. A cloud of horse-flies, attracted by melting pomade, buzzed about Sir William to the detriment of his temper, and at the gates of the Old Palace an unfortunate encounter with the Mesdames of France obliged him to quit his carriage and stand, hat in hand, in the gruelling sun, while Madame Adélaïde sustained a spirited monologue on the impending doom of every throne in Europe. "The English Crown will be the next to go," she said with a nod of her plumed head; "the mutiny that broke out in your fleet last year was the beginning. There is always a beginning—in France it was that miserable affair of the diamond necklace."

"Dissatisfaction among our seamen was settled long ago, Madame, with the redress of just grievances and the execution of the ring-leader."

"In Paris we thought the scandal of the necklace was settled when Madame Lamotte was condemned to be whipped, branded and imprisoned in the Salpêtrière. But, as you know, that was not the end. . . ."

Thoroughly out of humour, Sir William arrived late at Villa Gallo to find the Foreign Minister professing himself still too unwell to transact business. He lay wrapped in a striped silk dressing-gown,

with a box of fondants and a spittoon beside him, with which he concerned himself alternately.

"The matter cannot wait," Sir William said bluntly. "I have already given ye the substance of Lord Grenville's dispatch, and I must know how to answer it. After the King, my master, has so readily complied with the earnest desire of Their Sicilian Majesties and their Government for protection, I must be able to assure Lord Grenville that the fleet, fitted out at great expense for the sole purpose of protecting Their Sicilian Majesties and their dominions, will have free entry to all ports."

"Pray assure His Lordship of the satisfaction that Their Majesties and myself must feel for this evidence of His Britannic Majesty's concern for our perilous situation."

"Certainly I will convey such fitting sentiments, but I must also have something more concrete. I ask Your Excellency, in the name of Their Sicilian Majesties, to authorize my assurance to Lord Grenville that when the King's fleet comes into the Mediterranean it will be supplied with necessary provisions and stores at any of the ports in the Two Sicilies."

The Marchese had taken up a small mirror and was examining a mole on his neck. It was black, and much envied by those who wore counterfeit beauty-marks of sticking-plaster. "I fear, in the present uncertainty, I cannot make any promises."

"But, my dear Sir, the *sine qua non* of His Majesty's fleet remaining in the Mediterranean rests upon compliance with the articles laid down by Lord Grenville, not the least important being the total exclusion of enemy ships from all Sicilian ports."

"We can decide nothing until the courier arrives from the Marchese Circello. And we must also know more clearly the intentions of the Emperor before we come to a decision which in effect would be a declaration of war against the French Republic."

"This ye should have considered before Great Britain was put to the enormous expense of fitting out a fresh fleet. How was it supposed that ships-of-war could be maintained at sea without access to provisions, stores and water?"

"Not being a seaman, I haven't considered the matter," the Marchese sulkily returned. "But the Cavaliere John Acton *is*, and *he* requested British assistance, not I."

"I intend to send a messenger without delay to London, and I can do no otherwise than endeavour to prevent the sailing of the fleet!"

"I pray you, do not act so hastily! If you will but wait the arrival of dispatches from our Ambassador in London, I shall be in a better position to give you an answer."

"I will wait—but reluctantly." Sir William rose and picked up his hat. "Violent disorders require violent remedies, half measures seldom if ever turn to good account. I would remind ye of the learned Pontano's observation which he has left to posterity in an inscription at La Pietra Santa, '*Audendo Agendoque Res Publica Crescit—Non Iis Consilus Quæ Timidi Cauta Appellant.*'"

After a day or two Sir William's philosophic calm reasserted itself. "If Their Majesties and this Government would rather yield to General Buonaparte than risk bold measures, 'tis folly for me to lament. You and I, Em, will reap the advantage by returning home with the fleet, taking all our valuables with us!"

"We can't let the Queen be sacrificed to that shilly-shallying Gallo!"

"Having heard no more from him, I think I'm fully entitled to speak my mind freely to General Acton. But in truth no member of the government is capable of a firm line, and policy is dictated by the phase of the moment. Just now Ferdinando feels himself out of danger through having purchased Benevento at the French price, but I fancy there may be a return of panic when the great armament sails from Toulon."

Two days later Sir William's prophecy was realized, when accounts reached Naples that the French fleet had been seen from Piombino on the coast of Tuscany, steering southward. Garrisons in the forts were doubled, watchers with spy-glasses were stationed at Ischia and on the highest battlements of Sant' Elmo with instructions never to take their eyes from the horizon. King Ferdinando and the royal family beat a hasty retreat to Caserta. On Sunday morning, June the 19th, the appearance of an armed sloop sailing into the Bay was accepted by the populace as a French vessel bringing an ultimatum from General Buonaparte. Church bells ceased ringing and people on their way to Mass hurried instead to points commanding the harbour.

Emma and Sir William, watching alternately through a telescope, saw their hopes realized when they detected a blue ensign, the colour of Lord St. Vincent's flag. Emma was so excited she could look no more, and began to dance what she called *Un menuet de la marine Britannique*.

Sir William watched her indulgently from the tail of his eye. "When

the sloop draws level with Torre del Greco, I shall set out for Santa Lucia and take Antonio's boat."

"I'll come too," said Emma.

"No, my love—ye will stay. This is a noteworthy occasion, and reports of it will go to London. 'Twould not do to have it said that His Majesty's Minister was grown so old that he could not transact his Government's business unless he was escorted by his young and lovely wife!"

"I don't believe Lord Grenville would be told; you only pretend because you want me to stop at home!"

"And if I do?" said Sir William, patting her cheek.

"Then 'tis very selfish," Emma retorted decisively, "knowing as you do that I've been living for the day when a British Admiral would come to give the French a drubbing!"

When Sir William had gone, Emma ascended to the roof for a better view. After a while she saw him sitting under a white canopy in a four-oared boat skimming swiftly towards the sloop still making way. Sir William did not wait for the gangway, but climbed with great agility a rope ladder let down from the netting. For over an hour Emma sat on the stone coping. The sun blazed from a cloudless sky upon the sparkling water and the purple wastes of Somma and Vesuvius; upon white roofs and red cupolas; upon *lazzaroni* sleeping in the courtyard and bright green lizards darting along the parapet. At last Emma's vigilance was rewarded, and she saw Sir William descend to the boat and approach the shore. All impatience, she set off to meet him, running when nobody could see her down the *visco* to the steps of the Sacro Cuore di Gesù. From the summit she watched Sir William slowly mounting, reading a letter as he climbed. She called:

"Tell me, tell me quick, Sir Will'um, who comes with the British fleet?"

"Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, my love, with a powerful squadron. That is His Majesty's armed sloop *Transfer* with dispatches from Lord St. Vincent—the squadron is actually on its way to the Sicilian coasts!"



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EMMA'S excitement tied her to the telescope attached by a swivel-stand to the balcony of the mirror room. Every sail on the horizon raised her spirits; disappointments increased the luxury of anticipation.

"I feel wild as a young maid," she confessed to Mrs. Cadogan, "like I was before Greville tamed me. Do you remember, Mam, how different everything seems when you are a gal? May mornings when the air was a-shimmer with silver dust, and those times, fleeting they was and came unawares, when we touched magic harmony with the lovely place we left when we was born."

Emma gazed fixedly towards an horizon farther away than blue line stretching betwixt Capri and Ischia. Looking sharply at her daughter, Mrs. Cadogan raised her hand and passed it quickly before the enchanted eyes. "Now, Emy, no day-dreaming! As a little lass you caused me trouble enough by pretending you saw angels and such-like. There was a bird, a white swallow you called it, that you saved crumbs for. Spank you I did often for telling lies!"

"I don't remember the bird or the angels, but I do remember waking up and knowing that something wonderful was going to happen. I felt all sparkling inside, as if I was a beaker filled with champagne. Oh, Mam!" she cried, catching Mrs. Cadogan by the waist and twirling her round, "'tis like that now—I'm happy, and I'm excited for what is to come. For years and years to-morrow has been like yesterday!"

"I don't want change provided the days bring blessings. Don't forget, gal, that change is generally for the worse—the old know that: you never hear *them* asking for change!"

"But I'm not old—thirty-three is not old, is it, Mam?" Emma asked wistfully.

"It isn't young, bach. But you don't look your age. Sir Will'um's the one who is altering."

"He's brisk as ever—yesterday he climbed like a monkey on to the deck of the *Transfer* from Antonio's boat."

"He knew himself watched; 'tis when he thinks he's unnoticed that he acts as he feels."

Sir William's eagerness to see the arrival of Admiral Nelson's squadron yielded to diplomatic duty. The necessity of obtaining a guarantee of free admission of His Majesty's ships to all Sicilian ports involved him in an unnecessary correspondence with the elusive Foreign Minister, who continued to reside out of town.

A phase of confidence exalted the Neapolitan Court; the Toulon armament, steering a southerly course, had passed Naples. For several days warships and transports were seen lying off the west coast of Sicily, but anxiety was allayed by a message from General Buonaparte assuring the Governor of Favignana that His Sicilian Majesty had nothing to fear, the French Republic being "at perfect peace" with the King of Naples. On June the 8th the fleet disappeared, to be reported on the same date off Malta preparing to disembark troops.

The intelligence reached the palace on the night of the 15th while Emma and Sir William played reversi with the King and Queen. Ferdinando, whose hand made him a probable loser, cheerfully laid down his cards. "A fortunate circumstance for my Kingdom, say what you will," he commented on a high note of satisfaction. "If Buonaparte lays siege to the town he will be long engaged. La Vallette planned the fortress to be the most impregnable in Christendom."

"But can the Knights be relied upon to hold Valletta?" Sir William inquired. "The Order is by no means the living force that it was under La Vallette, Del Monte and La Cassiere. A great pity that De Rohan died last year; he was the strongest Grand Master of this century."

"Yes, the Baron de Hompesch is untried, and," Ferdinando added in a spiteful tone, "he is a German!"

"All the better!" Carolina asserted. "A firm stand can be expected."

"Expected? You speak truth! We may expect everything from Grand Master Ferdinand de Hompesch; but will performance resemble the leadership of those Austrian generals whose duty it was to thrust the French out of Italy? Shall we wait vainly for action in

the same way that we wait for the Emperor to ratify his defensive alliance with us? ”

Carolina responded angrily: “Perhaps you would feel greater confidence for Malta if the Grand Master was the usual Aragonese or French nobleman? ”

“*Gesu Maria!* My only concern for Malta is that it should keep Buonaparte occupied—I have plenty of islands! ”

“You forget that a French attack on Malta is indirectly upon us.” Carolina’s fan, keeping pace with her anger, detached some fronds from the ostrich feathers in her hair and wafted them across the table to rest on the top of Ferdinando’s white wig, where they wriggled like red caterpillars. “If the Knights are driven out, the island belongs to Sicily! ”

“No such thing, the Order pays a tribute falcon every year to the Spanish Crown! ”

“You would yield everything to Madrid! ”

Sir William considered it time to intervene. “Actually has Malta ever formed part of the Spanish possessions? ”

With a dark look towards his wife, Ferdinando answered: “Count Roger of Normandy took the island from the Saracens; afterwards it passed with this Kingdom to Swabia, Aragon and Castille. In 1530, when the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem were driven by the Turks from Rhodes, Carlos V of Spain allowed the Order to settle in Malta.”

“Next we shall see the French infidels more formidable than the Moslems,” Carolina muttered bitterly. “The Turks failed to take the island, but Buonaparte will succeed, and it will be given to the Duke of Parma in accordance with the Spanish Queen’s wishes! ”

“*Ma femme sait tout!*” Ferdinando’s sarcastic rejoinder struck familiarly upon Sir William’s ears. With a different inflection it had been the young King’s favourite excuse in former days for relegating tedious affairs of state to his able consort.

Emma’s voice broke in upon the bickering of the Sovereigns. “If Sir Horatio Nelson comes soon the enemy are at his mercy, and the fate of Malta will be settled by him! ”

“You are right, Miledi, as always, and one can but pray that the virtuous Admiral comes before too much is lost.” The Queen turned an anxious face to Sir William. “How long, Your Excellency, since you received accounts of the British fleet? ”

“Late this afternoon, Ma’am, a *billet* reached me written last Tues-

day when the *Vanguard* was off Elba. I've sent a copy to General Acton; Admiral Nelson asks many questions that must be answered. Above all, he wishes to know if the ports of Naples and Sicily are open to His Britannic Majesty's Fleet."

"Every assistance will be given consistent with our present critical situation," Ferdinando ponderously affirmed.

Carolina supplemented: "We only wait an answer from Vienna before taking a more decided part—we must be sure that the Emperor will defend us if we are attacked on account of opening our ports contrary to the Paris pact of 1796. But all the Admiral's requirements shall be met *à la sourdine*."

As the British Minister's coach rattled homewards over lava pavements Sir William shouted to Emma in requisitely stentorian tones: "I'm glad that matter is satisfactorily settled. After supporting Their Sicilian Majesties' petition for British protection it would have been no agreeable task to inform Sir Horatio that the ports of this kingdom were closed to him!"

On the following day fourteen Sail of the Line coming from the westward were sighted from the summit of Ischia. The news was received joyfully by the Government and by members of the English faculty in the British Minister's confidence. While Henry Smith was down on the quay negotiating with the master of a Maltese *speronara*, Sir William sat writing the letter that the boat was to carry to Admiral Nelson, a composition interrupted by Emma's excited announcement that there were sails on the horizon. For ten minutes she and Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan took turns at the telescope, by which time the expected armament had dissolved into the weekly frigate from Palermo.

"My dear Em, this is about the tenth occasion I've been informed that your superior sight has described what is obscure to my ageing vision. In future I shall wait until the squadron is so near that even I can see it!"

As it transpired, Naples was denied the glorious spectacle of a British fleet at anchor in the bay. On the morning of the 17th Emma was awakened by Sir William, hat in hand, standing by her bedside. Blinking drowsily, she asked: "Have I overslept? Ought we to be going somewhere?"

"No—'tis still early. I only came to tell ye that Captain Troubridge and Captain Hardy are come ashore for news of the French armament and to ascertain what this Government is prepared to do. Cap-

tain Troubridge, who appears a very decisive character, is armed with a list of written questions which he says must be answered 'Yea or Nay'. As no time should be lost, I think the quickest way is to carry the officers immediately to General Acton."

"Where is Admiral Nelson?"

"On board the *Vanguard*—Captain Troubridge is his emissary, and has instructions to rejoin the squadron instantly his business is concluded."

Sick with disappointment, Emma slipped out of bed. "I'm going to your room to look at the fleet," she announced miserably.

Bestowing a perfunctory kiss, Sir William turned on his heel. "Ye won't see anything—the ships remain off the bay at such a distance that the hulls are not discernible."

When he had gone she gathered an armful of clothes and pattered to the opposite chamber. The wide windows revealed the glittering bay, empty except for small boats skimming like bright-winged butterflies over the calm water. Emma had to step upon the balcony to see Captain Hardy's brig anchored off the Immacolatella. This point of vantage also gave her a view of the sea officers politely declining to precede Sir William into his carriage. Both were tall. Captain Troubridge had a handsome, open countenance, strongly marked features and eyes that had a deceptive look of indolence. Captain Hardy was thickset and radiated geniality: his jaw was square, and so were his hands clasping a battered cocked hat. As he stood watching his seniors settle themselves in the seat facing the horses he beamed with satisfaction to see them looking so comfortable.

Emma watched the trio drive from the courtyard before beginning to dress. Not for years had she felt so heavy with disappointment—not since the awful day when Greville had written finally casting her off. . . . Would no lesson cure extravagant expectations? . . . What glorious part could poor Emma play? . . . She was nothing. . . . Just a pretty woman. . . . Admiral Nelson had forgotten long since. . . . Did he dream of his wife's black eyes, of Fanny, who had naught but scorn for a sailor's doxy. . . . 'Twas seventeen years, almost to a day, since that hot afternoon in Hyde Park. . . . Time had levelled things. . . . Now each was called "My Lady," but Emy Lyon was also the friend of a Queen, a diplomat's wife who had warned her country of Spain's intention to break with England and join the enemy. . . . Had Fanny Nelson done so much for King and country? . . . Could she aid Nelson in beating Buonaparte?

. . . Could Emma Hamilton? . . . Suppose Naples dared not break the pact with France. . . . What then? . . . History showed that women were often more courageous than governments. . . .

Emma was exalted by a brilliant plan that suddenly presented itself. She and the Queen between them would throw open all Sicilian ports to Admiral Nelson and the British fleet! . . .

Ordinarily it was five minutes' walk from Palazzo Sessa to the palace, but so early in the morning Strada Caterina was blocked by a jostling multitude of goats, water-carriers, vegetable-carts, vendors of oil and charcoal, wine-sellers and black-garbed women coming from Mass: Emma was a quarter of an hour on the way, and attained the royal *largo* with her skirt ripped from the gathers and her hat dangling from its strings down her back. The palace guards, playing at *mora* as they lolled against the walls, grinned in friendly salutation as she passed into the vestibule. Cool air, smelling of beeswax, candles, olive oil and dust encompassed her. Old Jose Rodriguez, wielding a besom like a dead cactus impaled on a stick, swept strips of matting that bridged acres of polished marble. With a bow and a courtly gesture he placed the staircase and the palace at Emma's disposal. Climbing, she was smitten by misgiving. Supposing the King was not following his usual morning sport of sea-gull shooting on Lake Piccolo. "God forbid that I meet him disapparelled and wigless," she said aloud.

Outside the royal apartments she encountered the Queen's footman, Lalo, carrying a coffee-pot. "Is His Majesty gone out?"

"Yes, *Eccellenza*."

"Then tell the Queen that Lady Hamilton is come on an imperative matter. Say to Her Majesty that the fate of Europe is in the balance!" Emma's voice rose dramatically to the occasion.

Despite the urgency of the message Emma was kept waiting. She found the Queen in bed, rouged and powdered with irritable haste.

"Miledi, only a calamity can bring you so early. Is the Chevalier dead? or have the French invaded England? If the disaster was to this Kingdom I should have heard through the King or Acton."

"'Tis no misfortune, Ma'am, but a chance to beat Buonaparte once and for all." Emma spoke with the hurried emphasis of Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth. "You know, Ma'am, if the British squadron is denied hospitality in Sicilian ports, Sir Horatio Nelson has instructions to quit these seas and return to English waters? That is about to happen unless the officers now with Sir John Acton are assured

that all Port Governors will be ordered to supply their needs. I need not paint the horrid picture of invasion and revolution awaiting this Kingdom if Admiral Nelson and the heroic British officers and men are compelled to leave Your Majesties and the royal family to their fate."

"But what can I do, Miledi? We are tied by our treaty with France to admit no more than four belligerent vessels to our ports, and if we contravene, Austria may decline to support us, as the treaty pending with the Emperor only provides for an unprovoked attack such as an invasion by the French."

"There'll be an invasion if Sir Horatio cannot get provisions and water to enable him to pursue General Buonaparte's armament. Do you believe Naples will be spared just because you are defenceless?"

"I don't know what to think. We are in a vicious circle; all is too difficult, there is nothing for us but hope."

"The Two Sicilies are lost if you fear to take bold measures; it depends on you, Ma'am, for I fear the King and his Ministers will decide on a negative. On my knees I implore you," said Emma, flinging herself on the floor by the bed, "to act with courage and save the Kingdom!"

Alarmed by this onslaught on her fears and sensibilities, Carolina tearfully rejoined that she was powerless. "As lately as four years ago I could have issued any orders I considered expedient; since that time the King has taken control out of my hands and, with his bias towards Spain, governs with a different object. I can do nothing, Miledi, but trust in Providence."

"Madam, you can write an order to the Port Governors to receive and supply the British fleet, and I will send it to Admiral Nelson *only to be used if other means fail*. Should the King and his Ministers act vigorously, you will not be implicated; if they do not, yours will be the glory of saving the Sicilies and destroying the French." As she spoke Emma rose from her knees and crossed to a writing-table, where she found a pen, ink and paper: these she brought to the Queen.

"Give me your word, Miledi, that this order will only be used by the brave Admiral as a last resort."

"I give it freely, Ma'am, in the name of Sir Horatio Nelson and the British Navy. Now will you write: 'Maria Carolina, *La Majesté, La Reine des Deux Sicilies*, commands all Governors of Our ports

in Naples and Sicily to receive with hospitality the British fleet to water, victual, and aid them'?"

The Queen wrote as directed and surrendered the document to Emma. "My trust is altogether with the Admiral to keep this order completely secret; I must insist that it shall only be used *if all other means fail*."

"Ma'am, when I send the paper I shall pray that Your Majesty may be as little committed in the use of it as the glory and service of the country will admit."

Having obtained what she wanted, Emma was eager to depart, but she had to wait while the Queen lamented the indifferent health of the Hereditary Princess. "Though she is four months gone with child, the sickness persists. All that sustains her is a little ass's milk. She is a skeleton. I say to her: 'How can your child thrive unless you maintain your own health?' She weeps and says she wishes herself dead and the infant too. I am much concerned, as it requires the utmost vigilance to curb the strain of imbecility in the Spanish Bourbons. Happily none of my children are affected, but the Empress's son suffers from epilepsy. In my daughter's last letter she told me that poor little Ferdinand had fallen five times in fits before dinner."

"Perhaps it was a mistake for the Hereditary Prince and Princess Clementina to marry, seeing they are so closely related," Emma hazarded, with her gaze fixed on a carriage crossing the *largo*.

"The alliance was necessary in the interests of the Kingdom; we must bind ever closer the bonds with Austria, which now, unfortunately, also means tainted Spanish blood."

In the carriage sat Sir William, Captain Troubridge and Captain Hardy. After Emma saw them disappear towards Palazzo Sessa she made a determined and successful exit from the royal presence.

She reached home breathless from haste, and found she had a further pursuit to the mirror-room, where Sir William regaled the sea officers with maraschino from Zara. Upon Emma making her curtsy he said: "I'm glad ye are come, because our guests declare they must lose no time in rejoining Sir Horatio, and so prevent the enemy escaping by getting into any port." Turning to Captain Troubridge, Sir William continued: "I was delighted to hear ye go straight to your point and put strong questions to General Acton; I verily believe we did more business in half an hour than we should have done in a week in the usual official way here."

"I must say he answered me very fair," said Captain Troubridge. "The General is a true man of business, rarely to be met with."

"Did he promise everything you asked?" Emma sympathetically inquired.

"Not quite, Ma'am, because I asked for frigates, ours having parted company with Admiral Nelson consequent upon a gale encountered off Cape Sicie. Upon the General explaining the delicate situation existing until the Emperor agrees to support Naples, I could not press him to supply frigates, which would be an open breach of neutrality."

"We failed there," Sir William acknowledged regretfully, "but I flatter myself Sir Horatio will be well satisfied with the order I persuaded General Acton to write to the Governors of the ports."

Dismay showed on Emma's face. "Did the King sign it?"

"'Twas wrote in the King's name—I look upon the letter as a sort of credential for Admiral Nelson, and as Sicily to my certain knowledge is most partial to Great Britain, he will be sure of every aid from that quarter. Anyway, I flatter myself that Captain Troubridge is perfectly happy to have the order in his pocket!"

"I own 'twas a relief to get it. Without such authority the King's fleet must have gone to Gibraltar when supplies were exhausted."

Captain Hardy, taking his refilled glass from Sir William, said: "It struck me, sir, that the information we got regarding the position and strength of the enemy was hardly less important than the order for supplies. The French armament is formidable! Sixteen Sail of the Line, thirty frigates and gun-boats, 280 transports—not to mention the savants and lumber carried in the *Sans Culotte*."

"The presence of astronomers and mathematicians supports the wild story circulated by Monsieur Garat that the expedition is destined for Egypt, where a colony is to be established and a canal cut across the Isthmus of Suez," said Sir William.

"Which to some extent coincides with Admiral Nelson's theory that the French propose to open a trade with India by way of the Red Sea," Captain Troubridge answered. "He thinks an enterprising enemy, if they had large forces or the consent of the Pasha of Egypt, might with ease get an army to the Red Sea, and by concerting a plan with Tippoo Sahib, they could, at this season of the year, have vessels from Suez to the Malabar Coast in three weeks, when our Indian possessions would be in grave danger."

While Sir William and the sea officers discussed possible contingencies, Emma sat at the desk writing enthusiastically:

"God bless you, and send you victorious and that I may see you bring back Buonaparte with you. Pray send Captain Hardy out to us, for I shall have a fever with anxiety. The Queen desires me to say everything that's kind, and bids me say with her whole heart and soul she wishes you victory. God bless you, my dear Sir. I will not say how glad I shall be to see you. Indeed I cannot describe to you my feelings on being so near us. Ever, Ever, dear Sir, Your affte, and gratefull *Emma Hamilton*."

Taking the Queen's missive from her bosom she wrapped it in another sheet of paper which she endorsed:

"Sunday, 17th June 1798. A document procured by Emma Hamilton from the Queen of Naples which will open all Sicilian ports to the British fleet *if other means fail*. The Queen addressed this order to the Governors on condition that her intervention is kept secret as possible, and this promise was made by E. Hamilton on behalf of Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson."

Her own letter formed the wrapper which she sealed and addressed. When a lull occurred in the conversation, Emma turned, holding the packet high above her head. Her attitude was rarely beautiful and arrested attention. "Here is an order from the Queen *commanding* the Governors of all Sicilian ports to admit and supply the British Fleet. I did not think that the courage of the Neapolitan Ministers would allow them to give orders contrary to the terms of the Peace Treaty with the Republic, so while you was with General Acton, I went to Her Majesty."

"Well done!" cried Sir William.

"The Queen impressed upon me that she was assuming a deep responsibility," Emma continued, "and I promised on behalf of Admiral Nelson that the order will be used as a last resort, with the name of the Queen as little committed as the needs of the country and the glory of His Majesty's Fleet shall require."

"Ye've done excellently, Emma, and I think we must drink your health." With his glass raised, Sir William addressed the sea officers: "I give you 'Lady Hamilton'!"

"Lady Hamilton—the friend of Nelson," Captain Troubridge supplemented.

"And I say," cried Captain Hardy, "the toast is 'Lady Hamilton, the friend of Nelson and the patroness of the British Navy'! Hip, hip, huzza!"

Half-an-hour later Emma and Sir William accompanied the officers to the *molo*, whence they embarked for the *Mutine* lying off the Immacolatella. Farewells were warm, yet Captain Troubridge, after descending the stone landing-stairs to the waiting jolly-boat, hurried back again. "Have no fears, My Lady, that Her Majesty's order shall be misused. 'Twill only be put into operation if, as you think, the General's instructions prove ineffective."

"Yes, only then—and ask Sir Horatio to guard the secret carefully. If the order is used, maybe he'll tell us of it in a cautious way? Adieu, my dear Sirs. May God give you victory!"

"*Si Deus nobiscum, quis contra nos?*" said Sir William, raising his arm in farewell.

Standing beside the little blue Virgin on the Immacolatella, Emma and Sir William watched the *Mutine* gliding like a white swan towards the hazy gap between Cape Minerva and Capri.

"Did you see the Vice-Consul and Madame de Sieyès watching from their carriage drawn up on the mole?" Emma inquired.

"Yes, and I saw them driving off in a hurry, doubtless to inform Monsieur Garat that the British flag flies again in the Mediterranean. I hope the intelligence does not reach Buonaparte before Admiral Nelson comes up with him."

On the following morning, when Caterina parted the mosquito curtains, she waved a letter before Emma's sleepy eyes. "This came from Ischia in the fish *barchettino*, and I was told to bring it at once, *Ma Dama*."

Breaking the seals with fingers that trembled, Emma read:

"My Dear Lady Hamilton,

I have kissed the Queen's letter. Pray say I hope for the honor of kissing her hand when no fears will intervene, assure her Majesty that no person has her felicity more at heart than myself and that the sufferings of her family will be a Tower of strength on the day of Battle, fear not the event, God is with us. God Bless you and Sir William, pray say I cannot stay to answer his letter.

Ever Yours faithfully,

Horatio Nelson."

Transported by delight, Emma clasped the letter to her bosom. "Thank you, thank you," she whispered to benign Omnipotence. "Now I shall share in the glory, for without friendly ports our fleet could have no victory."

Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan shared her excitement: all through breakfast they discussed the forthcoming battle. "I have no doubt of the result," said the Envoy, "and I look on it as providential for us that Buonaparte is attacking Malta. By going through the Straits of Messina, Admiral Nelson will have time to get up with the French armament before they succeed in doing great damage. The Knights should be able to hold the fortress of Valetta against protracted siege, and doubtless their ships of war and galleys will inflict some damage on the enemy. Long experience of attacking and defensive warfare against the Crescent is good training to combat the modern enemies of the Cross."

"I can't understand a religious community that nurses the sick, yet takes pride in fighting," Mrs. Cadogan observed, "and the Knights seem to live more like princes than monks."

"For admission to the Order the *sine qua non* is legal proof of noble lineage for at least five generations on the sides of both parents. The purpose of the Order is twofold: firstly to help the sick and poor pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre; secondly to defend the Holy Sepulchre and to combat the Infidels."

Sir William was still speaking when Henry Smith hurriedly entered the room. "Excuse me, pray excuse me, but my news is so important I feel ye'd wish to hear it. Following my usual custom, I walked hither along the quays, where I learnt that at midnight Monsieur de Sieyès sailed in a brig avowedly to warn General Buonaparte of pursuit by a British squadron."

"The Devil!" exclaimed Sir William.

"Furthermore," said Mr. Smith, enjoying his moment of importance, "a Maltese *speronara*, flying Republican colours, an hour ago tied up against Molo Piccolo and landed a French officer with dispatches for Monsieur Garat. 'Tis said on the quay that Malta has been treacherously surrendered, but the people are resisting."

All morning Sir William endeavoured to verify the rumours. Recourse to General Acton was unavailing: the Prime Minister was no better informed than the *lazzaroni*. "I must wait for something more reliable to go on, before sending to Admiral Nelson," the British Envoy decided.

The first authentic information was given to Emma by the Queen. "Garat declares that the French landed at Malta on the 9th and 10th. These rogues have now a port and fortress directly in front of us from which no power can dislodge them."

"Except Admiral Nelson!" Emma answered confidently.

"The rascals pretend they have means to burn the English Fleet—I hope it is not true!"

"Of course it isn't!"

"We shall immediately protest to Paris and to all interested capitals. Perhaps this violation will bring in Russia. Paul I on his succession gave his protection to the Order of St. John, and as head of the Grand Priory in Poland provides annually a large grant."

"The Knights must be very rich."

"They were until six years ago, when the National Convention decreed that the Order should be annulled and its property annexed by France. Since that time *les Chevaliers* have been imprisoned and threatened with death and their estates seized."

"Now they have a chance, I hope the Knights will give their persecutors a drubbing!"

"Pray God it is so! It would, perhaps, be useful to let our friend and preserver Nelson know the news? My prayers and wishes follow the English Fleet. How ardently I desire for the time to come when all our strength and means may aid them!"

Next day the Queen sent further information:

"We protest to Paris, Madrid, Vienna, London, Russia, against this violation of territory; Malta belonging to us. They have expelled all the Knights, for whom I have neither esteem nor pity, as they did not defend themselves. I am melancholy and disturbed, but am always your sincere friend through life, *Charlotte*."

"All this talk which accompanies half-measures!" Sir William exclaimed impatiently. "At noon I saw Acton and the King together, and I gave them my opinion pretty free, which was: 'Dismiss Monsieur Garat and march on Rome directly. Send by express to acquaint the Emperor that Your Majesty must draw the sword again and throw away the scabbard, confident that His Imperial Majesty will not suffer the Sicilies to be sacrificed by a faithless enemy.'"

"What did the King say to that?" Emma inquired.

"I got no satisfactory answer. The Government still lives in daily expectation of a messenger from Vienna, and upon the Emperor's

motions they entirely depend, giving time for the French to pour fresh troops into Italy. Ten thousand are already arrived at Milan and twenty-five thousand more are coming from Marseilles."

"All my dependence is on Admiral Nelson!"

"And mine! If only the Government sends him the frigates and small vessels he is in need of it is the best chance of frustrating the plans of the French Directory."

General Buonaparte's latest victory had a most encouraging effect upon the Neapolitan Jacobins. Tricolour cockades and red caps of liberty were openly worn, powder and queues gave place to hair cropped *à la Bruto*, young men of spirit affected whiskers and coats buttoned to the chin. Clashes between *lazzaroni* and French sympathizers led to bloody encounters; demonstrations occurred outside the prisons; eight jailers from the Vicaria and Sant' Elmo were mysteriously stabbed to death. Monsieur Garat, emboldened by the supine reaction of the *giunta*, boldly demanded that all Jacobins should be released from prison and declared innocent. "And the Marquis di Gallo has obligingly complied," Emma told Cornelia Knight as they sat sketching in the Villa gardens. "I know these pretty gentlemen deserved to be hanged long ago for having planned the death of Their Majesties, but now all are to be let out on society again. After four years' imprisonment they will be more dangerous than ever."

"Gallo impresses me as being extremely unreliable," said Miss Knight, "and far too weak for a first Minister."

"He is a frivolous, ignorant, self-conceited coxcomb, who thinks of nothing but his fine embroidered coat, ring and snuff-box. Half Naples thinks him half a Frenchman. God knows, if one judges by what he did in making the peace for the Emperor, he must either be very ignorant or not attached to his masters or the common cause."

Days passed without bringing the hoped-for news of a British victory. Four of the frigates which had parted from the squadron early in the month put into Naples for supplies, which Sir William procured after much argument. "So many objections were raised to assisting Captain Hope that I question if aid will be forthcoming on either order carried by Admiral Nelson unless the Port Governors receive direct instructions from Her Majesty or Acton."

"I'll see if I can persuade the Queen," Emma said, "but 'tis not easy to get her to commit herself—she, like the rest, fears the consequences of coming boldly into the open."

"I can retail something new in that line. Last week Monsieur

Garat asked for grain for Malta, but was told that the island belongs now to His Sicilian Majesty, therefore the French could not enjoy privileges accorded to the Knights of St. John. However, all has ended with Garat being allowed to buy corn and provisions in Sicily for ready money. It is shocking that neither the Emperor nor Ferdinando will abandon their half-measures and take a decided part."

On the 29th of June it became known that the French armament had sailed from Malta, leaving behind a strong garrison of French Cisalpine and Polish troops, a frigate and war vessels of the Order.

"Monsieur Garat gives out that General Buonaparte has gone to the Levant; for that reason I think the French fleet has taken quite another direction," Sir William dryly observed.

The King and Queen and their Ministers were dismayed by the failure of Admiral Nelson to intercept the enemy. "While Buonaparte was at Malta we could feel some security, and waited confidently the moment when he must fight the British Fleet," Ferdinando informed Sir William. "But now what is the position? At any moment French ships of war may appear in the bay and threaten the capital. Why did not the British Fleet remain to protect our coasts?"

Queen Carolina was hardly less perturbed, but viewed the danger from a different angle. "It is of supreme importance to keep the valiant Admiral Nelson in these waters—I dread what would happen to Naples if the English squadron withdrew, and left us to the mercy of enemies both within and without the Kingdom."

"The only way you can prevent it is to write decisive private orders to each governor commanding them to meet every requirement of the British ships," said Emma. "As it is you can't be sure that the order Your Majesty wrote for Admiral Nelson will be acted on."

"I would not take such a measure if I could see any other course. If affairs go wrong and I am found out, Miledi, I dare not contemplate my position. But I do not think of myself, and I will write to Brigadiere Giuseppe della Torre. The Governor of Siracusa, and an old friend, who will be discreet."

"But, Ma'am, Admiral Nelson may put into some other port," Emma objected.

"Siracusa is the arsenal used by our ships of war, and I would not trust any of the other governors."

With much complacency Emma reported her diplomacy to Sir William.

"On the whole I think I managed very neat. The Queen will send by Fabiani, who is no longer a messenger in the ordinary way, and he should be at Siracusa in ten days from to-morrow."

"Let me see—that would be the 22nd. I hope in time to be of some real service to Sir Horatio."

All through the blazing days of July Naples waited expectantly for news good or bad. Eyes were constantly on the horizon, owners of telescopes found themselves possessed of many friends eager to penetrate a little further into the enigmatical blue distance.

Emma was suddenly obsessed by fear; as usual she ran for reassurance to Sir William. "Would it be possible for our fleet and the enemy to fight until both sides lost every ship? If there was no survivors we should never know. Oh, Sir Will'um, I'm beginning to think that must have happened, for we've heard nothing from Admiral Nelson since he wrote off Messina on June the 20th, and naught has been heard of Buonaparte since he left Malta on the 19th—they couldn't have missed each other in such narrow waters. Look at the calendar, Sir Will'um! 'Tis the 31st of July, thirty-one days since you got the last letter! All, all, must be drowned."

"'Tis possible, my dear, but not likely," answered Sir William, indulgently mopping Emma's tears as they rolled down her cheeks. "Ye forget that the Admiral had no frigates, and unless Captain Hope has succeeded in coming up with him, has still only the *Mutine* to depend on. That would make it impossible to communicate with us, and also places him at a serious disadvantage to the enemy, who could avail themselves of their frigates to give Nelson a wide berth. Comfort yourself, Emma; we shall hear all in good time."

Sir William was right. At noon on the following day a packet was delivered by the Queen's messenger, Fabiani, returning from Siracusa. It contained five letters from Sir Horatio Nelson. The first, dated July 20th, was to Sir William, and described the Admiral's fruitless search for the enemy's fleet from Malta to Alexandria, thence to the coast of Caramania in Asia Minor, and along the southern side of Candia to Siracusa.

"'Having gone a round of 600 leagues with an expedition incredible,' " Sir William read aloud, "'here I am as ignorant of the situation of the Enemy as I was twenty-seven days ago. You will easily conceive what has passed in my anxious mind.' "

"Good God, what he must have suffered!" Emma interjected.

"The Admiral's tribulations did not terminate on entering port. On the 22nd, apparently in the morning, he writes again:

'I have had so much said about the King of Naples' orders only to admit three or four of the Ships of our Fleet into his Ports, that I am astonished. If we are to be refused supplies pray send me by many Vessels an account, that I may in good time take the King's Fleet to Gibraltar. Our treatment is scandalous for a great Nation to put up with, and the King's Flag is insulted at every Friendly Port we look at.'

"And he says the same to me in my letter," Emma cried indignantly. "Listen:

'I wish to know your and Sir Wm's plans for going down the Medn. for, if we are to be kicked in every port of the Sicilian dominions, the sooner we are gone the better. Good God! how sensibly I feel our treatment, I have only to pray I may find the French, and throw all my vengeance on them.'

"What can it mean, Sir Will'um? Is the Governor disobedient to the Queen? Are her orders naught? Oh, it makes me so wild I don't know what to do! A miserable Governor to take on himself to defy the Queen and insult a British Admiral! After asking for England's help, too! Such treatment is insupportable, Sir Will'um, and the best we can do is to pack up and leave Naples to its fate!"

"I thought it would rouse ye!" Sir William chuckled as he looked at her lovely but furious face. "Now here is a *bonne bouche* in finale," he said, taking a folded paper from his pocket. "This note, written later in the day, is really yours, though it is addressed to:

'My Dear Friends.

Thanks to your exertions, we have victualled and watered; and surely watering at the Fountain of Arethusa, we must have victory. We shall sail with the first breeze, and be assured I will return either crowned with laurel, or covered with cypress.'

Emma's face revealed her joy. "It will be laurel, Sir Will'um, it will be laurel!"

Excitement engendered by the Admiral's letters was but an interlude; again the days dragged into weeks, each hour tense with expectancy. Emma and the Queen were much together, linked by the

ties of a joint conspiracy. "We can rejoice at some events in our favour," Carolina sighed. "The Emperor has at last signed the agreement to support the King if we are attacked by the French for breaking the terms of the Paris Pact; the Marchese Circello has instructions to conclude immediately a new Treaty of Alliance with Great Britain; Monsieur Joseph Garat has left us of his own accord. You will smile, Miledi, when I tell you that this last and least occurrence causes me almost as much satisfaction as the alliance with the brave English nation!"

"'Tis a blessing to finish with Ambassadors from the Republic!" Emma agreed.

"But we have not—yet! We are informed that Monsieur La Combe de St. Michel is on his way!"

"Who is he, Ma'am?"

"A General—and of course a Member of the Convention!"

"I hope he comes in time to see Admiral Nelson's victory; then the sooner he goes back to France the better, say I!"

"My dear Miledi, we think alike in nearly everything!"

Reports of the British Fleet's failure to meet General Buonaparte produced greater insolence and boldness among the French and their sympathizers and a reaction correspondingly gloomy among the Neapolitans. Prices were rising, current coin was scarce, 30% was the exchange on Bank Policies, a rate falling hardly on the lower classes. Blame was placed upon the monopolists, who had purchased, for sums long spent, taxes that should have gone to the public chest. The Government evinced alarm, but were ignorant how to alter matters.

"We must do as well as we can," General Acton informed Sir William, "in this disagreeable but not desperate case. Both Their Majesties are in the greatest uneasiness for their own situation at this moment, but if Admiral Nelson is at hand, consequences may be averted. Is there a danger that he may run to the Levant again without knowing for certain the position of the French, and leave the Two Sicilies exposed on these moments? We are now in danger of war directly on account of the Admiral's refreshments in Siracusa. You see fairly our position?"

"My dear Acton, I repeat, as I often do, the wise Pontano's salutary advice: 'By daring and doing the Republic grows, not by those counsels which timid folk call caution.' The Romans on the borders of this Kingdom are in arms and cutting the throats of the French,

whose robberies they can no longer endure. Why does the King hesitate to take advantage of the present discontent of the Roman peasantry, and march on Rome? ”

Meanwhile beggars and prostitutes multiplied; the price of oil advanced by five *grana a rotolo*; the Cavaliere Luigi di Medici, Mario Pagano, Ignazio Ciaja, Domenico Bisceglia and Teodoro Monticelli were brought to trial and found guiltless after four years' imprisonment.

September opened with a thunderstorm, but in two days the weather was again as hot and sultry as if no rain had lashed from a livid night sky, flooding the cellars of the *fondachi*, driving forth the diseased and destitute to die or curse in the gutters.

On Monday the 3rd, Sir William sat in his closet writing his weekly dispatch to Lord Grenville, a habit of thirty-four years which the uncertainties of communication could not derange. Emma, suffering from headache and depression of spirits, lay on her bed, blinking at the white palaces of Chiaia gleaming amid wooded hills that curved to meet the green shoulder of Cape Posilipo, until her eyes closed in sleep. She was awakened by her mother, shouting from the door.

“Come, Emma, come quickly! A brig flying a blue ensign is nearly in, and Sir Will'um's gone down to the quay. Come as you are, gal; even if you're naked you mustn't miss this!”

From the balcony of the mirror-room they watched the brig gliding over the sparkling water to anchor under the lee of Castel dell' Uovo. A boat, with Sir William in the stern, was pulling to the ship. As the British Minister drew alongside, two officers appeared on deck and leant over the side. The *Mutine* was so close to the shore that Emma and Mrs. Cadogan could clearly distinguish that one wore a gold epaulette. “Neither is Captain Hardy,” Emma breathed. Suddenly she clutched her mother's arm. “Look, Mam! They're telling Sir Will'um. They're acting what happened—ships blowing up and others sinking; sailors dragged from the water; men dying; someone wounded in the head. Oh, God! Can Admiral Nelson be killed? Ah—there's foolish I am! The blue ensign is hoisted!”

“But, my lamb, blue is the colour of Lord St. Vincent's flag too!”

“What of that? The *Mutine* is with Sir Horatio's squadron—and 'tis the *Mutine*—I know her rig, though I can't see her name. Look, Mam, the officers are laughing! They're going to get into Sir Will'um's boat. One carries a leather wallet. Mam! It is Victory! Victory!! Victory!!!”



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IN the late afternoon the barouche from the British Legation paraded the crowded streets of Naples. The coachman's box had been removed and the hood collapsed, making the carriage into a triumphal car which revealed the occupants of the wide back seat to the gaze of a delighted populace. Elevated on three cushions between Captain Capel and Lieutenant Hoste, Emma announced the British triumph by a bandeau round her forehead which proclaimed in letters cut from gold paper: NELSON AND VICTORY. Posed like a statue, she left the sea officers to acknowledge vociferous shouts of "*Viva Nelson!*" "*Viva l'armata d'Inghilterra!*" Frequently the carriage was brought to a standstill by *lazzaroni* clambering on the wheels to salute the officers with brandished daggers—savage homage that Captain Capel would have repelled at the sword point but for Emma's timely explanation. "That's the sign you are brothers, both able to fight and win."

"Is it? 'Faith, if this is how these ruffians act in friendship, I'm glad I've not to meet them in anger," he muttered, still fingering his sword-hilt.

The streets were thronged with all classes of people, but not a cockade or a red cap was to be seen. As dusk descended, thousands of coloured lamps outlined the windows of English residences and many of the foreign legations. Suddenly tongues of flame licked the sky from the heights of Capo di Monte, Sant' Elmo and Posilipo, signals for smaller bonfires to appear like flickering stars around the rim of the bay.

While the fires still blazed Emma brought back the sea officers to dress for the Opera and subsequent audience at Palazzo Reale. "We can do little, Ma'am, but shave and powder," lamented William Hoste. "We had been out so long a cruise before the action that I'm in want of almost everything, and poor Capel is in worse case

than your humble servant, as he must travel light in order to get home more speedily with the dispatches."

Captain the Hon. Thomas Bladen Capel, Signal-Lieutenant of the *Vanguard*, was carrying overland to England duplicates of the dispatches Captain Edward Berry conveyed in the *Leander* to the Earl of St. Vincent.

The necessity of expediting Captain Capel's journey occupied Sir William throughout the afternoon, and he flattered himself that by sending the officer through Vienna an effect would be produced on the Emperor's policy. "Let the account be known of the glorious and complete victory you gained over the boasted French Fleet at the mouth of the Nile," he counselled. "Such news should determine the wavering Government of Vienna to take a decided part. They must learn of Admiral Nelson. *He* did not wait for daylight to attack the French Fleet on the 1st of August, neither did he await the arrival of four ships cruising off Alexandria, nor did the *Culloden* being ashore prevent his falling on the enemy like a hawk on its prey; that is the way to do business! *Audendo agendoque res publica crescit—non iis consiliis quæ timidi cauta appellant.* How proud I am of feeling myself an Englishman at this moment! Great Britain alone has truly faced the enemy in support of a good cause, and Sir Horatio Nelson is the greatest hero of that Great Britain."

"Ay, ay, Sir!" the young officers answered in fervent corroboration.

That night at San Carlo the British in full force greeted with deafening applause Sir William and his party. A further outlet for patriotism was supplied by a hastily composed operetta named *Nelson del Nilo* with La Tomeoni in the rôle of a sphinx singing *Rule Briannia* to Antonio Benelli, who, as Admiral Nelson, agreeably responded with *God Save the King*.

The appointment with royalty obliged Sir William to shepherd his guests from the theatre while the ballet was in progress. They went by the private corridor connecting the opera house with the palace, and were ushered immediately into the presence of the Sovereigns.

"There is to be no ceremony," Ferdinando announced as he hurried forward—"all is *en famille*, that we may better express to the gallant representatives of noble and virtuous Sir Horatio and the Illustrious George, your King, our sense of joyful deliverance."

Carolina's impatience would not be curbed until her husband had

finished his speech. "My gratitude is engraven on my heart," she cried. "*Viva, viva* the brave nation and its navy. The world has been accustomed to see prodigies of glory by the English on the seas and we expected much from the gallant Nelson, but no one could look for so total an overthrow of the enemy. Miledi tells me that ten French ships are captured, five were lost in the battle and four escaped; but what touches my heart is the wound received by our gallant liberator."

"Thank God it has not proved so serious as was first supposed," said Captain Capel. "I was near the Admiral as he was struck, and heard him exclaim, 'I am killed; remember me to my wife.'"

"Did he send his love?" Emma jealously inquired.

"No, My Lady, that was the message: 'remember me to my wife.'"

"I am told the wound was in the head," Ferdinando observed. "Has it affected his understanding?"

Neither officer concealed his indignation. "Within an hour Admiral Nelson was again on deck," said Captain Capel, "watching the fire burning furiously in the French flagship. As it became apparent that *L'Orient* would blow up he ordered every exertion to be made for saving life. By that time the *Vanguard* had only one boat that could swim; she was immediately got out, and, with serviceable boats from other ships, succeeded in saving about seventy Frenchmen."

"I should have left the scoundrels to burn to cinders!" Ferdinando retorted.

"That is not Admiral Nelson's way of treating gallant but unfortunate enemies," Lieutenant Hoste answered hotly. "On the day after the battle he informed the Commandant of Aboukir that it was his intention to allow all wounded Frenchmen to be taken ashore to proper hospitals, which was done, to the surprise and gratitude of the enemy."

"Was the brave Admiral aware the *L'Orient* was filled with jewels and valuable rarities pillaged from the Treasury and churches of Malta?"

"He was informed afterwards—but such is the fortune of war."

"That Buonaparte was ashore with his army must have caused Admiral Nelson more regret than the loss of treasure," Sir William surmised. "But why do we dwell on slight miscarriages, as if to detract from this great victory? Now we have command of the seas the French armies in Egypt will have difficulty in maintaining them—"

selves. Everything now calls for a united effort to restore peace and prosperity to Europe. The great opportunity secured by the valour of Sir Horatio and the officers and men he commands must not be lost through lack of enterprise."

"I shall reconstitute my army and march at its head into the Roman State," Ferdinando announced.

Sir William bowed urbanely. "Your Majesty, we confidently expect that your name, with Admiral Nelson's, will be engraven on history as joint saviours of Europe."

The audience terminated on a note of mutual esteem. As Sir William's carriage conveyed his party towards the legation, he referred to the royal interview. "It is strange how rapidly the human heart adjusts itself to conditions of safety after prolonged anxiety. All memory of fear vanishes in a moment, and with it gratitude to Providence for lifting the load. This morning, my dear Sirs, when you were obtaining pratique, I went to tell the glorious news to Their Majesties. *Then* the King had no fault to find. He started up from his seat at table to embrace the Queen, the Prince and the Princesses, exclaiming: 'Oh, my children, you are now safe!'"

Emma continued the story: "I went to the palace a full hour afterwards, and the scene was still going on. How shall I describe the transports of the Queen? 'Tis not possible! She cried, kissed her husband, her children, walked frantic about the room, cried, kissed and embraced every person near her, exclaiming: 'O Nelson, Nelson! What do we not owe you? O Victor! Saviour of Italy! O that my swollen heart could tell him personally what we owe him!'"

In the days which followed it really seemed as if the policy of the Sicilies was crystallizing. Efforts were inaugurated to raise an army of fifty thousand men in addition to thirty thousand already in tolerable discipline, remnants of the force employed in 1796 to protect the frontiers of Abruzzo. A request was sent to Vienna that General Mack might be spared from the Emperor's service to command the Neapolitan army. Queen Carolina had made a personal appeal to her son-in-law and confidently awaited a favourable reply.

"Mack Von Leiberich has distinguished himself many times in campaigns against the infamous Republicans," she told Emma. "Under his leadership the Sicilian army will attain supreme heights of valour. All our past misfortunes I ascribe to our officers proving themselves traitors and cowards."

A further encouraging factor was the news from Malta. Attempts of

the invaders to sell by auction tapestries and valuables belonging to the Carmelite Church at Medina had provoked a revolt. The French Commander Masson was killed and the garrison obliged to retreat into the fortified towns.

But Emma and Sir William felt little interest in subsidiary aids to the allied cause. "History," the Minister remarked, "either ancient or modern, cannot record an action that does more honour to the heroes than that of the 1st of August—Nelson has made himself immortal."

Before the battle-scarred ships arrived for re-fitting the Court was thrown into mourning by the sudden death of Princess Elizabetta, Their Majesties youngest child. The shock brought on the Queen's ague and banished her to bed. Emma and Sir William were also invalids; Emma had fainted and bruised herself when hearing of the Admiral's wound; Sir William was stricken by his old complaint, excess of bile.

On the 18th of September the *Alexander* was described off Capri, escorting the sea-sodden *Culloden*, moving slowly due to oakum and canvas fothering her damaged bottom. To the anguish of Captain Troubridge, his ship had grounded when going into action, a misfortune which compelled him to be a spectator of the battle.

Immediately the ships were sighted, Emma and Sir William shakily quitted their beds to embark in their barge waiting at the arsenal steps. They were not alone. Beflagged small craft and bands of music were already far out on the bay. Happily the weather was calm, and the barge seemed to glide over the glassy water. "All the same, my dear, I hope the ordeal will not be repeated too quickly, eager as I am to welcome our great hero," sighed Sir William, returning thankfully to his couch.

Now that the moment was so near, Emma's excitement allowed her no rest. A dozen times she inspected Admiral Nelson's apartments, quite as often she looked at the dress to be worn at the meeting. The skirt was exquisitely embroidered with garlands of oak leaves and acorns framing the words: "Nelson of the Nile." It was an extravagant expression of joy—purchased on credit. "We'll pay for it," she told Sir William comfortingly, "when you get the money that Greville says will come this year."

"Dear Charles is always so optimistic," Sir William replied with gentle irony.

At eight o'clock in the morning of the 22nd the *Vanguard* was seen

off Capri; two hours later Sir William's barge, followed by another accommodating his band of musicians, led a flotilla of decorated boats towards the flagship. On the way Emma spoke little, but she held Sir William's eyes. "Em, sweet Em,"—he spoke low so that Cornelia Knight should not hear—"you look like the lovely child who came to meet me that day long ago when I first went to Paddington Green. Do ye remember? I had a new French coach, and nothing would do but you must climb up to look inside, to the chagrin of Charles, who wished you to make a good impression on me. Which ye did, my darling, which ye did."

"Oh, Sir Will'um, isn't it wonderful?"

"That you captured my heart?" he inquired with an old man's complacency.

"No! no!" she irritably returned. "That I—we, I mean—are going to meet Nelson, the saviour of Italy and Europe. That we are going to share a little in the glory. Oh, Sir Will'um—I can't explain."

The *Vanguard* was hove-to in the sheltered bay of Castel-à-Mare, and the ship's black hull and tall spars were reflected in a shaky, broken pattern amid far-flung shadows of chestnut woods that clothed the hills behind the town.

As the barge came alongside, Captain Hardy left a group of officers standing near the entry port and hastened down the gangway. Sir William waved his hat, crying: "My dear Sir! My dear Sir! This is a great moment." Rising eagerly, he stumbled and sank back upon the seat. "Devil take my legs! But no matter, I must go more cautiously, having only just risen from a sick bed."

Captain Hardy and Cornelia Knight regarded Britain's Envoy with concern, but Emma's compassion had flown to Admiral Nelson, whose ashen face smiled jauntily over the bulwark. The wound across his forehead showed as a vivid scar, his eyes were deeply shadowed and his cheeks sunken. "My Lady," he cried, "I said I would be presented to you crowned with laurel or cypress, but God is good, and I return with the chaplet of victory."

In a moment Emma was out of the barge and up the ladder. Arrived at the top, she almost fell into his arm. "Oh God, is it possible?" she sobbed. "Forgive me! Forgive me! I thought only of victory, not of the price you paid."

Abandoned to grief, her lovely face sank on his shoulder. He gently rallied her. "Come, cheer up, my dear Lady! Wounds must be expected in fighting the enemy—they are the marks of honour."

"Don't think I'm not proud of what you've suffered for England," she smiled, though her eyes still swam with tears. "How shall I begin? What shall I say to you? God, what a victory! Never, never has there been anything half so glorious, so complete. I fainted when I heard the joyful news, and fell, bruising my side. But what of it? I should feel it a glory to die in such a cause!"

A tremor of the ship and a deafening crash were followed by a smell of gunpowder and a cloud of smoke above the quarter-deck guns. The hills behind Castel-à-Mare sent an echo ricocheting through the ravines of Montes Lactarii; before it rapped into the distance another gun was fired.

"A thirteen-gun salute for the British Minister—and his Lady," Admiral Nelson explained.

Emma searched her reticule for a letter she brought from Carolina. She found the packet and presented it. "My dear adorable Queen sent this; she is still too ill to leave her bed. I cannot describe her transports when she heard of your victory. She fainted and kissed and embraced every person near her, crying: 'Oh, brave Nelson! Oh, God bless and protect our brave deliverer!' As war is not yet declared with France, she cannot show herself so openly as she wishes, but she has done so much, and rejoices so very publicly, that all the world sees it. She bids me say that she longs more to see you than any woman with child can long for anything she takes a fancy to."

"You must pray present my humble duty and gratitude to Her Majesty for all her marks of regard; assure her it is not thrown away on an ungrateful soil."

While the Admiral spoke, Sir William, Miss Knight and Captain Hardy appeared at the entry port. Displaying great emotion, the Minister clasped the victor's hand in both of his.

"My dear brave friend, I find it difficult to express myself at this great moment, when it is my privilege to convey, not only my own feelings of admiration and gratitude, but that of our august Royal Master, whom I have the honour to represent. In his name, and in my own, I thank you!"

"Almighty God made me the happy instrument of destroying the enemy's fleet, but victory could not have been achieved but for the judgment of the Captains. Together with their valour and that of the officers and men—it was absolutely irresistible."

Cornelia Knight, impatiently awaiting a pause, intervened: "Sir Horatio, may I, a daughter of the waves, express my gratitude, and

with it this Pindaric Ode written at Sir William's wish to celebrate one of the noblest actions that ever graced the annals of our Naval history."

Pleasurably surprised, Admiral Nelson accepted the printed brochure. "Ma'am, I am indeed honoured to be the recipient of an Ode from your distinguished pen. Early this year, when I was recuperating from wounds received at Santa Cruz, my dear wife read aloud to me from your learned work on the military and political life of the Romans."

"I hope you did not find *Marcus Flaminius* so tedious that it retarded convalescence?"

"No, indeed, Ma'am: your writing provided so much food for reflection that my mind was taken off myself."

"Miss Knight excels in all she undertakes," said Emma with hearty admiration. "I only wish I could take lessons of her, for I declare I've never read a prettier thing than those verses on the Battle of the Nile."

Cornelia did not look flattered and responded coolly: "I undertook the task with extreme diffidence. If my abilities equalled my feelings, the subject would have inspired me with an ardent desire to write an ode *after the style of Pindar* in praise of you, Sir Horatio, and your brave associates."

Immensely gratified, he turned the leaves, and found the ninth stanza so pleasing that he read it aloud, speaking, as he always did, with a slightly nasal intonation:

*"'Britannia's Hero gives the dread command;
Obedient to his summons flames arise.
The fierce explosion gains the skies,
And high in the air the pond'rous mass is thrown.
The dire concussion shakes the strand,
Earth, air, and sea affrighted groan:
The solid Pyramids attest the shock,
And their firm bases with the tremor rock.'"*

He closed the brochure with frank reluctance. "I mustn't read any more of this aloud, for even with my blind eye I can see you have said enough to fill me with vanity. I am much obliged, very much obliged."

Conversing, the party moved towards the Admiral's quarters in the stern. The fore cabin extended across the ship and was furnished

with a long dining-table, sideboards, many leather-seated heavy oak chairs, a pair of mahogany wine-coolers and a table littered with dog-eared periodicals. Four muskets taken on board the *San Josef* adorned the bulkhead. Propped in a corner was the charred flagstaff of *L'Orient*, rescued from the water after the ship blew up. The truck served as a perch for a small, perfectly white bird, which, evincing no fear, studied the visitors with beady black eyes.

"That's an unusual bird," said Sir William, raising his quizzing-glass. "What species? It has the shape of a swallow—must be an albino. Most peculiar! How did ye come by it, Sir Horatio?"

"It is a very singular thing; this bird came on board the evening before the battle, when we were about four leagues from Pharos Tower. I have had other instances of a bird coming into my cabin prior to former engagements. Throughout the action this little fellow perched in the topmast shrouds, and many a time in the heat of battle we looked up at it, for the blaze from the guns turned night into day. I never saw it move, but my coxswain says just before the French flagship blew up the bird rose and circled several times around us. Afterwards, as I lay wounded in my cot, I saw it had followed me."

"God bless my soul!" Sir William ejaculated.

Uttering a shrill call, the bird unfurled its wings: its sudden flight ended on Emma's shoulder.

"Cupidy?" her soft voice queried. "Cupidy?"

"What do you mean, my dear?" Sir William's voice carried remonstrance.

She answered evasively: "The name just came into my head, Sir Will'um."

"And a prettier name there couldn't be," Admiral Nelson stoutly contended. "Come, Cupidy! Cupidy!" Like a white arrow the bird flew from Emma to perch a moment on his gold epaulette before returning to the flagstaff.

"A most extraordinary occurrence!" the British Envoy decided.

It was hot in the cabin, and the party adjourned to the stern gallery, which had swung towards the naval arsenal and dockyard of Castel-à-Mare. Two Neapolitan 74's—the *Guiscardo* flying Marshal Fortiguerra's flag, and the *Sannite* commanded by Francesco Caracciolo—were anchored in the roadstead. The picturesque small town consisted of a long quay from which several narrow streets meandered up-hill until thwarted by the woods. From the deck of a ship every-

thing on shore was visible. Vintagers gathering grapes on the buried city of Stabiæ and invalids bathing in the chalybeate springs along Strada Cantieri were as clearly seen as the ropemakers on the beach dipping cordage into a vat of hot tannin. Admiral Nelson's party looked only at the *Culloden*, careened against the mole. A man, wearing a scarlet phrygian cap and a yellow rag round his middle, clawed over the coppered hull, scraping off clumps of weed and exposing burnished patches amid the vivid green of verdigris. Sails and thrumming that had been fothering her broken bottom on the voyage from Aboukir Bay made a sodden heap close to Captain Troubridge, who stood on the stone pier watching the heaving down.

"One must feel for Captain Troubridge's misfortune in grounding when going into action," Sir William remarked.

"Poor Troubridge!" Emma sighed compassionately. "He must have been so angry on the sandbank, so brave an officer! In short, I pity those who were not in the battle. I would rather have been an English powder-monkey, or a swab in that great victory, than an Emperor out of it!"

"His anguish of mind cannot be described," Admiral Nelson replied. "That the *Culloden* served as a beacon and may have saved the ships close in his rear from a similar fate was his one consolation. Misfortunes crowd fast upon the dear fellow; in his last packet from home he learnt of his wife's death."

"Dear, dear," murmured Sir William; "I am sorry to hear that!"

Emma laid a persuasive hand on the Admiral's empty sleeve. "Let's go now and take him back to Naples with us, where we can cosset and comfort him!"

"My dear Lady Hamilton, I wouldn't for the world discourage your tender heart were anyone concerned but Troubridge. His is the character that best overcomes trouble by fighting it alone. A few minutes before you arrived he came on board, and was better than I expected. The active business, and the scolding he is obliged to be continually at, does him good."

"But he would come to friends," Emma contended, "and you would be there. We have rooms aplenty for him to be private in if he wished."

Sir William had joined Miss Knight and Captain Hardy conversing at the other end of the gallery. Leaning her elbows on the balustrade, Emma plucked petals off a fading pink rose taken from her belt. By the King's orders Court Mourning was in abeyance during the

fêtes for the victors of the Nile; Emma wore a round gown of fine Indian calico beneath a blue silk shawl worked with gold anchors. A Leghorn hat, trimmed and tied under the chin with blue ribbons, was pushed back to dangle childishly upon her tawny ringlets. Sir Horatio also leant his elbow upon the balustrade; having only one caused him to stand sideways, which gave him Emma's profile as a substitute for a view. Her colour deepened, but she did not turn. Her eyes followed pink rose-petals floating like tiny coracles on the water far below.

The Admiral drew his breath unevenly; his left forefinger traced an imaginary crack in the oak rail. "Lady Hamilton, with your permission I had better go to an hotel."

"Why?" Turning quickly, Emma stared in dismay. He stood so close that he saw the brown mark on the vivid blue of her eye; so close that he smelt the rose crushed in her hand.

"It may be more convenient, as I must have much business with every officer. If you agree, it will not deprive me of being with you long enough to tease you."

"I won't agree! Do you take me for a wretch, that I would let you go to an hotel when you need nursing and care? Everything is prepared, and my mother bade me tell you that, since learning of your wound, she promised herself the pleasure of mending it."

"Thank you—and so be it!" He sighed, as if relieved of a duty. "In my present shattered state I am unable to fight against your kindness. Ten days ago I never expected to see my friends again. I was taken with a fever which very near did my business: for eighteen hours my life was thought to be past hope. It pleased God to restore me, but I am still very weak both in body and mind, and my head is often ready to split."

Emma's answer was rendered unimportant by the approach of the state galley flying the King's standard. Returning to the quarter-deck, the visitors in turn applied their eyes to the Admiral's collapsible small telescope and saw the gilded figurehead of Parthenope cleaving the water by the exertions of thirty prisoners chained to ten oars. The galley, a splendid legacy from the Spanish Viceroys, was only used on great occasions.

"His Sicilian Majesty pays you the highest compliment in his power," Sir William remarked. "During thirty-four years at this Court I've seen the Spanish galley used on no more than half-a-dozen occasions."

"I am very gratified," said Admiral Nelson, "though I consider we deserve some acknowledgment of the fog and danger we have undergone, principally on account of this Kingdom. What exactly is the position? Do they mean to help themselves?"

Sir William shrugged his shoulders expressively. "Karl Mack, the Austrian generalissimo who distinguished himself against the French in the Low Countries, is, I believe, to command a Neapolitan army now recruiting. But all plans for decisive action wait on the Court of Vienna, and diplomatic relations with Paris continue. A new Ambassador, Monsieur La Combe de St. Michel is daily expected in the room of Monsieur Garat, who left Naples in July."

"It is astonishing! Precious moments are being lost—three months would liberate Italy."

"If you can cure the Italian of procrastination you will accomplish an even greater feat than vanquishing the French Fleet. I am tired of quoting Pontano's advice: '*Audendo agendoque res publica crescit—non is consiliis quæ timidi cauta appellant*'."

The galley was now within a cable's length of the *Vanguard*. King Ferdinando and the Hereditary Prince and Princess could be seen peering between crimson damask hangings of the *carrosse*, a tilted canopy like a waggon cover which formed a cabin aft. Triumphal strains of a march composed for the occasion by Paisiello drifted across the water, a gracious tribute played by the King's band of music accommodated on the deck between the *carrosse* and the benches of the galley-slaves.

Admiral Nelson and Captain Hardy waited at the entry port; Sir William, Emma and Cornelia Knight stood on the quarter-deck close to the nine-pounders that were to fire a salute of twenty-one guns. While the King paid compliments to the hero of the Nile, Emma observed the gunner time the royal salute by pacing back and forth across the deck to a verbal formula: "If I wasn't a gunner I shouldn't be here—FIRE ONE! If I wasn't a gunner I shouldn't be here—FIRE TWO! If I wasn't a gunner I shouldn't be here—FIRE THREE! . . ."

As the crash of the last gun rumbled through the ravines behind Castel-à-Mare the King beckoned to Sir William. "You have stood my friend from my boyhood; come now and translate my gratitude to our liberator. Say to him: 'History, either ancient or modern, does not record such a battle. You have saved us, Sir, by this most glorious action, which, superior to any battle fought at sea, has this singular

and important consequence of being to all Europe, I repeat it, of the highest advantage.'"

Sir William's translation of the King's rapid and high-pitched Italian pleased, but did not embarrass the hero, who answered: "I assure Your Majesty I am penetrated with your condescension in noticing the battle, which I fervently pray may add security to Your Majesty's Throne, and peace and happiness to all mankind."

At Admiral Nelson's invitation the visitors began a tour of the ship, but they proceeded no further than the Midshipmen's Mess, where the young gentlemen were dining by the light of a few candles, when the Hereditary Princess fainted. The sight of the table alive with black-headed weevils, dexterously dislodged from ship's biscuit, proved too much for her delicate condition. After being carried by Captain Hardy and Mr. Jefferson, the surgeon, back to the Admiral's quarters, Clementina was left to the care of Emma and Cornelia Knight. In the eighth month of pregnancy the Hereditary Princess looked even more childish and woe-begone than in her bridal days. Her sallow face was pinched and marked with brown stains, her arms were thin as drum-sticks, her legs, stiffly extended under her muslin dress, looked too brittle to support the rich weight of fecundity.

Holding a vinaigrette to the Princess's nostrils, Miss Knight voiced her thoughts in English. "I'm surprised Her Royal Highness came—foreigners are very peculiar."

"She represents the Queen, who shakes too much with ague to climb a ladder," Emma explained as she rubbed Clementina's tiny, claw-like hands.

Discouraged by the inefficacy of her ministrations, Miss Knight wandered out upon the stern walk, and in a moment returned greatly animated.

"A boat has just put off from the *Sannite* bringing the Bailli Caracciolo wearing full dress. I wondered if he would ignore the victory, as he has conceived a jealous resentment against Sir Horatio. Mama and I met him the other evening at General de Pietra's, and the Bailli would talk of little but a grievance he has against Admiral Nelson for passing in front of his frigate during an engagement off Corsica. He thought it very unfair, because British officers get many opportunities to distinguish themselves."

Emma answered scornfully: "I've heard that tale before—Caracciolo is always being cheated by someone."

"He is a well-bred man," Miss Knight murmured in extenuation as she wandered back to the stern gallery.

As soon as she was out of earshot, Princess Clementina opened her sorrowful dark eyes. "I heard you talking secrets about the Cavaliere Caracciolo," she said. "He likes the French better than the English and the Spaniards better than either."

"What makes you think that, my poor lamb?"

"It just came into my mind," was the evasive response.

Admiral Nelson returned to the quarter-deck to receive the Neapolitan officer, who offered his congratulations with seeming sincerity. "As a seaman I present my felicitations to all concerned for the skill and great activity displayed in the battle."

His tone seemed displeasing to the hero of the Nile, who answered coolly: "I hope there is not a person in the British Fleet who does not attribute this great victory to the blessings of the Almighty on our exertions in a just cause."

"It must be a matter of regret that four enemy ships escaped—but doubtless their capture will provide yet another triumph for Britain."

"It has been in my power to take or sink eleven Sail of the Line and two frigates; *Le Guillaume Tell*, *Le Généreux* and two frigates alone escaped me. I think with you, Sir, that they will yet complete our triumph!"

"Do you feel equally confident of vanquishing the French army in Egypt?"

"They have a complaint amongst them caused by the heat and bad water that will make Egypt the grave of the greater part. Buona-parté has advanced fifteen thousand men into a strong post in Syria, which he is fortifying—a proof he expects attack from that quarter. I hope he may not be disappointed!"

Pleading duty, the Bailli excused himself from breakfasting on board and left the *Vanguard* without waiting to see the King. Almost immediately the main-yard was braced forward and the ship gathered way. Princess Clementina at once felt benefit from the breeze, and while the rest of the party were regaled on a fowl roasted for the Admiral's dinner, she lay contentedly in a cot which Captain Hardy caused to be slung in the stern walk. Tom Allen, Sir Horatio's servant, had the task of making the bird serve eight persons, and he did it by severing all the flesh from the bones and dividing the fragments. "There you are, Majesty, a slice of breast, some dark

meat, a bit o' liver," he said, plumping a plate before the King; "the same for the young royal gentleman *and* for the rest of the company. Share and share alike, as we say in Norfolk."

Tom Allen had established himself as "a character", and acted up to the reputation in a manner that frequently disconcerted his master. He was thirty years old, a native of Burnham Thorpe, and from the age of ten had served different members of the Nelson family. Primarily a gardener, he had surprised the Rev. Edmund Nelson by throwing up a job at the Parsonage in order to go to sea as body-servant to Captain Nelson on his appointment to the *Agamemnon* a week before the French declaration of war. In five years Allen had become a useful but unpolished valet and a devoted tyrant since the amputation of his master's arm. Outwardly he had changed but little in his new calling; he walked ponderously as a ploughman, and a navy-blue livery seemed less familiar than a linen smock. A thatch of straw-coloured hair crowned his round, red face; he spoke with a country drawl in a slow way at variance with his stubborn purpose.

Before serving his master, Allen unfolded a napkin and was about to fix it under Sir Horatio's chin when it was testily torn from his grasp. "Dammit, I'm not a baby!"

"There's gravy and you'll splash yourself."

"I shan't, confound you, and I'll do as I please!"

"Have it your own way, though I warns you I can't get the stains out."

This dialogue, conducted in hurried whispers, reached Emma's keen hearing. She sat on the Admiral's left hand, ready to act as interpreter for the King, who occupied the place of honour.

"Have you heard," said Ferdinando, "that the Romans were commanded to illuminate their houses in celebration of the victory gained by the French navy at the Nile?" A forefinger laid against the royal nose provided a droll implication.

"Though I know the French to be masters of guile, I am at a loss how even they succeed in preventing true intelligence reaching Rome."

"They are also masters of the post-office," Sir William interjected from the opposite side of the table.

"But Italians are not easily duped," Ferdinando boasted; "guessing the truth, they hung out lanterns representing San Michele subduing the enemy of mankind."

When the prolonged laughter due to a royal *bon mot* had subsided, Sir William said: "The authorities at Paris are rather more modest than their subordinates at Rome, and content themselves with describing the action as a drawn battle."

"They are quite right," the Admiral answered—"only they drew the blanks and we the prizes."

Emma was so occupied by translating the quick repartee that she had no time to eat. Lightly, as if by accident, Sir Horatio's hand brushed her arm. "This will not do, Lady Hamilton—that you should neglect your own needs in order to benefit us. When I stay with you I will watch that my ignorance of Italian does not impose on your generosity."

"Don't rob me of a pleasure—if I could act as your interpreter and secretary while you are in Naples I should feel I had a part in the Battle of the Nile."

"Have you not?" he asked with whimsical inflexion. "But for your influence the Queen of Naples would not have ordered Don Giuseppe della Torre to victual the fleet, and unless we had got water and fresh provisions at Siracusa we couldn't have returned a second time to Egypt."

"Then I had a little part in destroying the French Fleet?"

"And in vindicating me in the eyes of my friends and my enemies. It caused great ill-will that I, a junior officer, was given command of the detached squadron in preference to two of my seniors in Lord St. Vincent's Fleet, and my failure would have caused no small satisfaction."

"Sir William heard how ill both Sir William Parker and Sir John Orde behaved."

"God knows I did not solicit the honour of commanding the Mediterranean Squadron, and often during the anxious weeks that we sought the French Fleet I felt great uneasiness lest the judgment of my friends was misplaced. Everything depended on my endeavours to meet the enemy—on that I stood or fell. All I could feel certain of was my honest intentions."

"And your valour!" Emma added softly.

Through the open ports came confused sounds of horns, flutes, viols and mandolines. Everyone jumped up: the King, the Hereditary Prince and Cornelia Knight hurried to the stern walk; Sir William followed Captain Hardy and Mr. Jefferson on deck.

The Admiral and Emma were alone. "Boats are coming out to give

you welcome," she explained. "The Neapolitans are mad with joy, and you will be killed with kindness. The people have been learning *Rule Britannia* and *See the Conquering Hero Comes*; so many came to me that I had pieces of music printed to give away. Sonnets on sonnets have been written, and I must have taken a ship on purpose to send you all that I read. How I gloried in the honour of my country and my *countryman*! I walked and trod on air with pride, feeling I was born in the same land with the victor Nelson and his gallant band. I wish you could have seen our house the three nights of illumination. 'Twas covered with your glorious name. There were three thousand lamps, and there would have been three millions if we had had time. All the English vied with each other in celebrating your wondrous victory; not a French dog dared show his face."

"I feel almost overwhelmed. Your kindness to me, with Sir William's, is more than I can express." Quite openly he dried the tears that ran down his face. It was very quiet in the cabin: the only sound was made by the white bird as it pecked crumbs from a china dish. Emma's emotions were poignant as the hero's, though less easy to define.

At Captain Hardy's suggestion Admiral Nelson stood on the poop in order that he might be seen by the people coming out from the shore. Every boat was decorated with flowers and emblems, music came from all sides, a hundred voices cried: "*Nostro Liberatore!*" Polaccas with vividly coloured lateen sails skimmed like flights of butterflies past the *Vanguard*, tacked and came back; a *caravel* chartered by the opera house brought the company to serenade the heroes of the Nile. Neapolitan *bravi* were answered by cheers from British seamen.

Visibly overcome, Sir Horatio saluted and waved his hand. "I believe that never has such a distinguished reception fallen to the lot of a human being. Your Majesty, I am deeply indebted to you and the Sicilian nation. If God knows my heart, it is amongst the most humble in the creation, full of thankfulness and gratitude."

The *Vanguard* was to enter the *darsena*, a large wet dock surrounded on three sides by the arsenal, the palace gardens and the towers of Castel Nuovo. As the ship approached the harbour cries and yells of *lazzaroni* thronging the *molo* and the quay floated across the water. "*Viva Nelson!*" "*Nostro Liberatore!*"

King Ferdinando, towering beside the hero, laid his big hand on the fragile shoulder. "It is fitting that you should land in the Nilense

district of my city. In Seneca's day, Puteoli was the first port of Italy and the gateway for Rome's eastern trade. Ships from Alexandria discharged cargo on the spot where you will land. My good friend the Cavaliere Hamilton must show you our statue of the Nile with the sphinx under his elbow and a crocodile's head beneath his feet, erected by the merchants of Alexandria, who were greatly indebted to Nero."

Emma excitedly exclaimed: "Why didn't we think of it before—we'll drive home by way of Strada di Nilo!"

The King and the Hereditary Prince and Princess were rowed in the Admiral's barge to the palace landing-steps; Emma, Sir William and Miss Knight remained in the *Vanguard*, and disembarked half-an-hour later at the jetty below Castel Nuovo. As soon as the carriage was descried rounding the escarpment the crowd on the mole rushed to intercept it; in a moment the horses were brought to a standstill by a savage ragged mob who yelled and fought as they tried to see the hero. They climbed up the wheels and thrust their dirty faces into the carriage; one, quicker than the rest, noticed that Sir William and Admiral Nelson wore similar stars on their coats. "You are quite right," said Sir William, taking the dirty hand and flinging it aside. "The Order of the Bath. You, fellow, would be all the better for one. *Eh, va, via!* Although there's so much water about, these people rarely wash if they can help it. At one time it was Ferdinando's custom to throw the dirtiest of his subjects into the sea if he got a chance, until the honour became so sought after that it palled even upon him."

Cornelia Knight, who found herself in the background, hastily introduced an anecdote. "When Mama and I first went to Rome we had letters of recommendation to Antonio Canova, which led us to become intimately acquainted with him. He allowed us to watch him at work, and I recall the sculptor telling us that the King of Naples and a *lazzarone* supplied the subjects of 'Hercules and Lichas'."

"Ferdinando's actions would provide themes for innumerable brushes and chisels," Sir William agreed, "though the resultant works of art might be too free for a public unused to Neapolitan licence."

Preceded by Sir William's running footmen, the carriage moved slowly through shouting masses thronging the narrow streets. Ad-

miral Nelson kept his hand at the salute, Emma waved and answered sallies in the patois of Naples.

On reaching Palazzo Sessa, Sir Horatio received visits from Captain John Ball of the *Alexander* and from Josiah Nisbet, commanding the 20-gun sloop *Bonne Citoyenne*. Josiah had been five days in the port and was already quite at home with Emma and Sir William. He had developed into a tall, well-built young man with a sulky, reckless face, evasive dark eyes and a slanting, secretive smile.

"You'll be set up here, Sir," he informed his step-father; "wait till you've eaten Mrs. Cadogan's dinners and sampled Sir William's cellar. I can tell you Emma and I were more than half seas over t'other evening after imbibing too freely of Sicilian sherry."

Emma turned on him furiously. "I was nothing of the kind, and I won't be spoken of like that!"

"It was only a joke!" he answered defensively. "A fellow doesn't know where he is with you—sometimes I say much worse than that and you only laugh."

"Josiah, you are never to speak in such a manner to one of the fair sex, least of all to Lady Hamilton." Sir Horatio's voice was cutting and his manner formidable. "Apologize immediately."

Captain Nisbet placed himself in front of his hostess and drolly ducked his head. "I'm sorry, Emma, that I said you were tipsy."

"Sir, have you forgot yourself entirely?" Admiral Nelson thundered. "Down on your knee and say: 'My Lady, I am guilty of a lie and ungentleman-like behaviour. I crave forgiveness.'"

The young man looked round rebelliously, saw his step-father's implacable expression, and complied with bad grace. He was white with anger when he rose to his feet. "With your permission, Sir, I will now go to Mrs. Cadogan to collect some clothes she has repaired for me." Passing close to Emma, Josiah muttered so that only she could hear: "You were just as tipsy as I!"

The scene disturbed everyone, and the Admiral gladly accepted Sir William's suggestion of resting in his own apartments until evening.

As soon as dusk fell the front of the house was illuminated with padellas—earthenware cups containing fat and wicks set in a wooden frame, spelling "Nelson of the Nile" in letters tall enough to be read across the bay. Many of the English residents followed the example, and shaking patterns of golden light could be seen along the Chiaia and up in the hills—magic palaces floating upon the purple

dusk. The mirror-room, which had been given to Admiral Nelson, reflected the illuminations in his honour, the flaming tongues of Vesuvius, and lanterns rocking on the prows of fishing-boats.

That night the doors of the Legation were closed to visitors other than Lady Knight, Cornelia and Captain Ball, who came by special invitation. During the afternoon Miss Knight had written a new stanza to the National Anthem. She brought it with her, and Emma immediately sang it to Sir William's accompaniment on the *viol d'amore*:

*"Join we great Nelson's name
First on the roll of fame,
Him let us sing;
Spread we his fame around,
Honour of British ground,
Who made Nile's shores resound—
'God save the King!'"*

"Encore! Encore!" cried Captain Ball in a rich bass voice. "Until this moment I thought our National Anthem a poor composition, but since Miss Knight has worked her improving art I concede it has great merit. Sing again, Lady Hamilton, pray sing again!"

"Ay, pray sing again, Lady Hamilton," echoed Admiral Nelson, looking flushed and happy.

Captain Alexander John Ball was forty-one, and his frizzy, silky hair receded at the temples. He had distinguished himself in Rodney's flagship at the Battle of the Saints; eight years later he gained a reputation for justice and discipline by establishing order and goodwill in a mutinous ship. He had a serious face, kindly, penetrating eyes, a long nose and a judicious mouth. His manner was mild, grave, benevolent; the lawn sleeves of a bishop seemed in better accord with his decorous serenity than the uniform of a combatant officer.

Mrs. Cadogan honoured the guests with a special supper served from her private kitchen. "As we're *en famille*, I'm giving you homely dishes," she announced—"a hot-pot, apple pie and Welsh rabbit. We get a surfeit of rich fare, entertaining as Sir Will'um does, so when we're private I find a pleasure in making with my own hands stews and such-like as I was brought up on. Sometimes me an' my daughter cooks together, for I don't mind admitting that Emma has a lighter hand at pastry."

With her fan Lady Knight patted Mrs. Cadogan's hand. "You are

a good creature," she said fervently, "really a very good creature, and I respect you, Ma'am!"

Porter was the sole beverage; Cornelia vowed she would not touch it, but eventually succumbed to Captain Ball's persuasion. "We all yield to him in the end," Admiral Nelson said. "There was a time when I declared I would never court his acquaintance."

"Ye went further than that," Captain Ball slyly reminded. "When I made ye a polite visit not many months ago you received me by inquiring if I had come to have my bones broken."

"God bless my soul!" Sir William exclaimed. "Such treatment sounds very unlike our gallant friend. You tantalize us, Sir, we must hear the whole story."

"I'll tell it myself," the Admiral answered. "Ball is a modest fellow, though one would not think it on first sight, and that began my prejudice. The first time I saw him was at St. Omer, in 1783, and he was wearing epaulettes, *twelve years before they were adopted as part of our naval uniform*. You can imagine I thought him a great coxcomb for putting on any part of a French officer's dress."

"And ye should have seen Nelson showing his contempt," Captain Ball laughed. "He took every occasion to pass me in the street in order to glance me up and down!"

"To make a long story short, I didn't see Ball again until May of this year, when he was placed under my orders and I received him as he described. But it wasn't very long before I was forced to change my opinion. Figure to yourself a vain man one Sunday evening at sunset, walking in his cabin with a squadron about him. Figure to yourself this proud, conceited man, when the sun rose on Monday morning, his ship dismasted, his fleet dispersed, and himself in such distress that the meanest frigate of France would have been a very unwelcome guest. The gale did not abate, and we were driving on an enemy's shore; such was our plight until Tuesday afternoon, when the *Alexander* took us in tow. That night our situation was the most alarming we had yet experienced, and fearing from the state of the weather that both ships would go down, I peremptorily desired Captain Ball to abandon us to our fate. He, however, saw fit to disobey my order, and it is thanks to his courage and exertions that the *Vanguard* lies in the Bay and that I am here to tell the tale."

Flushed with embarrassment, Captain Ball fidgeted with the lid of a salt-cellar. "I only did what any seaman would do."

"'Tis wonderful even to hear of such exploits," Emma sighed

rapturously. "Oh, why wasn't I born a man so that I could have gone to sea and become a hero?" Everyone laughed indulgently. Her elbows were propped on the table, her upturned chin rested on her clasped hands. The orange glow from the illuminations shone on her perfect face, so eager, fearless, tender and wilful.

"Lady Hamilton, we would rather you remained as you are—an inspiration and a star to guide us," said Captain Ball.

"My dear Sir, what an Ambassador you would have made!" Sir William smiled.

"I am receiving too many compliments," Captain Ball shyly answered. "I only hope the good opinion of my friends is endorsed by two of our enemies whom I have entertained against their inclination during the last seven weeks. By the way, Sir," he said, turning to Admiral Nelson, "Contre-Amiral Blanquet was yesterday released on his parole, according to your orders."

Lady Knight eagerly interrupted. "My daughter and I can give you the French Admiral's opinion of the treatment he received. Last evening he called on the French Consul, whose apartments adjoin ours, and without any intention to listen we heard Monsieur Sieyès exclaim: 'Oh! how delighted I am to see you, my dear Admiral, out of the hands of those abominable Englishmen!' Blanquet instantly replied: 'Say nothing against the English, Consul. They fight like lions, and they have treated me and my officers and men most kindly.'"

"I'm glad the prisoners were contented with what I could do for them," Captain Ball said with satisfaction. "They were agreeable fellows and we got on very well."

"The nearest I wish to get to a Frenchman is in battle." Admiral Nelson spoke decisively.

"But I'm not like you, who see everything as either black or white," Captain Ball mildly protested. "My observations, made in a desultory way, you know, have led me to the conclusion that no nation has a monopoly of either good or evil attributes."

Laughing, Sir William rose from the table, and brought the meal to an end. "Captain Ball, you and I are brother philosophers. *Non enim tam auctoritatis in disputando, quam rationis momenta querenda sunt.*"

After supper Emma was to give a display of Attitudes in the small salon. While Gaetano arranged a curtained alcove, she walked through the open windows to the balcony. Men on tall ladders were

replenishing the padellas, the air was hot from thousands of tiny flames and reeking of tallow. The courtyard was flooded with rippling orange light laced by black shadows of Judas and cedrati trees and queer, elongated shapes of men and women. The glare had its effect on the nocturnal habits of uninvited guests, who, instead of sleeping, were diverting themselves with dancing, singing, lice-hunts and playing at *mora*. Such bright light intensified the outer darkness: a black void extended beyond the golden nimbus cast by the flaming façade.

Firm, brisk footsteps crossed the marble floor and struck the stone of the balcony. Emma stood quite still, concealing intense excitement by exaggerated unconcern. Coming to the balustrade, Sir Horatio looked down at the animated scene; surreptitiously she glanced at his pale profile and the vivid tracery of his wound. It came as a surprise and a shock to discover that she was the taller by half a head. Curious not to have noticed before. . . . Women should be shorter than men. . . . It made one ashamed and almost guilty to stand higher than a hero. . . . Greville, Sir Will'um, and Sir Harry all stood six feet or thereabouts, but Jack Payne was a little man. . . . Sailors were said to be small as a general thing. . . . What a sorrowful tender mouth! . . . 'Twas sensitive as a woman's. . . .

"How strange," he mused, "that I should be here."

"It doesn't seem strange to me. I feel we have stood here, or in some other place like it, time out of mind."

He turned and looked at her; she noticed with a pang the blank pathos of his sightless eye.

"Your hair is very beautiful," he said; "it is burnished like red gold."

"It is not so long as I wore it when I first came to Naples," she answered slowly, as if the statement was profoundly important. "Then it came down to the hem of my gown, and 'twas thick enough to use as a cloak."

He drew his breath with a sharp sound. "I would like to have seen you like that—with long hair, I mean."

A sudden yell from the courtyard caused them both to swing round. Beggars, street vendors and the scrapings of the city had caught sight of the slender, uniformed figure and stared upwards with homage on their dirty, savage faces. "*Nostro Liberatore! Viva Nelson del Nilo!*"



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

FOR two days after his arrival Sir Horatio had considerable fever, but he would not rest. He interviewed various people engaged on repairs to the *Vanguard* and *Alexander*, transacted business connected with the squadron, and with his secretary, Mr. Campbell, answered innumerable letters. Emma's attempts failed to lure him from his duty. His drawn face, pale save for the scars on his forehead and burning patches on each cheek, confronted her with firm determination.

"You must not trouble yourself on my account, My Lady. I am used to long hours of application. If I do not consider the needs of the people in His Majesty's ships, how can I expect them to meet the demands I make on them? Admirals must necessarily become *contractors*."

"Won't you consider yourself too? You look fit to drop."

"When I have done and my mind is at rest—to-morrow, Lady Hamilton."

"You said that yesterday."

"Then I will go with you, but—to-morrow. One of my greatest boasts is that no one can say I ever told a lie."

Foiled in her wish to improve the victor's health, Emma drove down to the *darsena* and prevailed upon Captain Hardy to release, for a day's pleasure, William Faddy, fourteen-year-old midshipman of the *Vanguard*, whose father, a Captain of Marines, had been killed before his eyes in the battle. William's sad story aroused all Emma's compassion, and she gave him a happy morning by engaging a couple of gaudily painted *calessi*, and, to the surprise of onlookers, raced with him up and down the Corso.

Walking back to Palazzo Sessa, he asked: "How, Ma'am, did you know what a young man likes to do? Those hackney two-wheeled

chaises are very dangerous and the triangular seats most uneasy—and how the horses go when the reins are pulled! Ladies don't generally enjoy such bold amusements."

"Shall I tell you a secret, Will'um? Well, 'tis that I'm still wild and giddy as I was when I was a maid, and it comes quite natural to throw off lady-like ways. How often did I beat you this morning?"

"Three times, Ma'am, and mine was the better horse."

"And the lash was never used," she said with satisfaction.

In the afternoon Emma, William, and Josiah Nisbet drove in the sociable to the royal porcelain factory at Portici, where a dinner-service was being made for the party that was to celebrate Admiral Nelson's birthday on the 29th of September. There were one thousand pieces, each marked "H.N. Glorious 1st of August."

Josiah appeared surprised rather than appreciative. "There are sufficient plates for an army," he bluntly remarked; "you couldn't use them in a lifetime."

"Indeed there won't be enough," Emma responded in nettled tones. "Eighty special guests will dine, one thousand seven hundred and forty are invited to the ball and eight hundred will sup. You don't know what is expected of us, for both Sir Will'um's position and mine at this Court is quite extraordinary."

"My father-in-law would be out of his element, and you'd please him more by sending a wing of a fowl to his apartment where he could dine in peace."

"That I shan't! 'Tis a birthday party for the Hero of the Nile, and the dinner-service is but one of many things preparing."

Emma was not singular in her eagerness to fête Sir Horatio. In addition to hospitality offered by British residents, invitations were received from friendly Neapolitans and from nobles anxious to curry favour at Court. The first to be accepted came from Sir John Acton. The Chief Minister let it be understood that he acted as proxy for the King, prevented from revealing his sentiments while peace ostensibly prevailed between the Sicilies and France. The company was distinguished, and, to Emma's annoyance, restricted to the dominant sex. Fifty sat down to dinner, among them members of the Government, the Church, the Army and Marine. Sir William and the Rear-Admiral returned shortly after six o'clock, in good humour with themselves and the world.

"Truly I stand some chance of being killed by kindness," Sir Horatio told Emma; "all combined to do us honour, and my one

regret was that only Ball and Hardy were present to hear the handsome things said of the Band of Brothers who fought at the Nile. After dinner I received a letter from the Queen delivered by her son Leopold; the youngster acquitted himself with elegance and grace. I also had an invitation from the King desiring me to dine on board Caracciolo's ship, at a date to be arranged later. I wish it could have been on shore, but until the war that is not possible."

"Was anything said about breaking with the French?" Emma inquired.

"General Acton told me that this country was determined to declare, and not wait for the Emperor. I am to have a meeting with the Marquis di Gallo to-morrow night to discuss the best means to take."

"How I hate him, dressed-up little popinjay! You'll find he'll do nothing, but talk and admire himself in the glass."

"The Marchese di Gallo's ambition is to be thought like that great man, the late Prince Kaunitz," said Sir William; "and indeed to all outward appearance of magnificence and foppery he represents his idol very exactly. But there the resemblance ends, Gallo having no depth of understanding."

Returning from his conclave with the Foreign Minister, Sir Horatio expressed a similar opinion with less restraint. "The Marquis de Gallo I detest," he said, flinging himself into a chair between Sir William and Emma. "He is ignorant of common civility. He admires his ribbon, ring and snuff-box so much that an excellent *petit-maitre* was spoiled when he was made a Minister."

"Did he give you any information about the policy this Government means to adopt?" Sir William inquired.

"He avoided any plain statement and hid any possible meaning in such a mesh of fine words that I was incapable of disentangling it. But I told him plainly that war alone could save these Kingdoms."

"How did he answer?" Emma and Sir William asked together.

"'That diplomacy could discover many alternatives to such a desperate course.' Upon that I bade him good night. If they will not help themselves, I must leave them to their fate and go about my business. In another ten days Naples will see this squadron no more, except the King calls for our help, and if the Government goes on losing glorious moments, we may soon be required to save the persons of Their Majesties. I would recommend that you and all your property are ready to embark at very short notice."

"We have long been reconciled to the idea of an enforced de-

parture," Sir William replied. "Several months ago Emma and I packed in cases my collection of vases, representing a small fortune and immense antiquarian value, ready for shipment to England when an opportunity occurred."

"If you have to leave Naples we'll put the cases on board a Ship of the Line."

Emma was dismayed to learn that Naples was to be deserted by the squadron unless calamity recalled the ships. On the morning of Sir Horatio's birthday she was able to broach the matter when she went to the mirror-room with her gift—a silver-gilt cup engraved with her own initials. "'Tis not new, but a cup I've had a great while, and much prized because it was a farewell present from my dearly loved Duchess of Argyll. I thought maybe you'd rather have one of my treasures than a new thing with no history to make it valuable."

"Lady Hamilton, that the cup is precious to you makes it doubly precious to me. I thank you, and every time I drink from it—which will be daily—I shall think of the giver."

They stood in the window watching white-capped waves driving before a strong *scirocco* to beat in foam upon the shore. Low-hanging clouds hid Vesuvius; Capri had disappeared; Punta di Posilipo was but a shadow in the mist. The *Colossus* and her convoy of four victuallers from Gibraltar lay tossing at their moorings; the frigate *Terpsichore*, that morning arrived with dispatches from Sir James Saumarez, was tacking under topsails and topgallant-sails to safer anchorage in the outer roadstead.

"Is there any news of *Le Guillaume Tell*?" Emma inquired.

"She is still keeping safe inside Valletta harbour—we shall get her yet. But I have just received some interesting intelligence of Malta. Sir James Saumarez, becalmed off that island, fell in with the Marquis de Niza, who, to my surprise and relief, has obeyed my orders to take post there. A deputation of islanders coming on board the Portuguese flagship stated their belief that a summons to the French would induce them to abandon the island, whereupon Sir James and the Marquis sent in a strongly worded summons to surrender. After three hours' consideration the French General, Vaubois, replied that the English had forgotten 'they are Frenchmen who are at Malta; *quant à votre sommation, les Français n'entendent pas ce style*.'"

"What effrontery! How did Sir James retaliate?"

"He very properly supplied the islanders with twelve hundred

stand of arms, ball-cartridges, cartouche boxes, etc., from our French prizes."

"Do you know what became of the Knights?"

"Buonaparte lost no time in expelling everyone connected with the Order. On or about the 18th of June the French frigate *Armetis* escorted Grand Master Hompesch to Trieste; the Knights are supposed to have fled to Russia with the idea of offering to the Emperor the crown and regalia of the Grand Mastership."

"I wonder they didn't come to Ferdinando, as he claims Malta."

"This Government *claims*, but I have yet to see that it gives any assistance to the Maltese insurgents though they are fighting under the Neapolitan colours. However, I shall soon make myself acquainted with the true state of matters. In a very short time the *Vanguard* will be at sea, and it is my intention to go off Malta and leave a proper force to blockade the port. Thence I shall proceed to Zante, Cephalonia and Corfu to ascertain what can be done, afterwards to Egypt to attend to the destruction of the French shipping. Until I know that is accomplished I shall never feel that the French army is cut off from Europe."

Emma listened in dismay. "But what of the Queen of Naples if you leave her? I hope she will soon be well enough to see you, for when you know her you will change all your ideas. She is a great woman and would, if she had her way, drive the French from Italy. But she gets no support from the King or the Ministers, who think only of living comfortably for as long as the enemy will let them."

"We must see how matters go on—at present I believe the greatest service I can perform for our own good King and Their Sicilian Majesties is by attacking our common enemies where and whenever I find them."

Contrary to Josiah's expectation, his step-father entered with spirit into the entertainments that Emma and Sir William had provided in his honour. To accommodate eight hundred guests, long tables were laid in the galleries wherein Sir William's Etruscan and Greek collections were formerly exhibited. The dinner was intended to surpass anything yet given at Palazzo Sessa. The first course was composed of eight various sorts of fish handed round and thirty-eight other dishes set on each table, all incomparable in their kinds; in the second course forty-nine dishes were offered to the guests; the dessert and wines were magnificent. Beginning at two o'clock, the repast ended at six; afterwards there was a concert to allow time for

recovery before the ball at eight o'clock. Many of the gentlemen were drunk and some of the ladies; Sir Horatio, who had restricted his libations to three glasses of wine and water, was completely sober, so was Emma, though she laughed more loudly and often than usual. Sir William, Captain Ball and Captain Hardy were rather red in the face and glassy of eye, but Josiah was hilariously drunk, and an object of slightly scornful curiosity to the Marchese di Gallo and the Russian diplomat, Chevalier Italinsky. Admiral Nelson watched his stepson with anxiety and annoyance until his view was obstructed by a crowd eager to speak with the hero.

At dusk the ball-room was illuminated with hundreds of candles, and Emma, dressed in a Greek robe, unveiled a rostral column inscribed with the words, *Veni, Vidi, Vici*. As the British flag fluttered to the ground she sang, to a setting of her own composition, *See the Conquering Hero Comes*. Emma had begun the last verse when Josiah threw himself before her in a threatening attitude. "Be quiet, you jadel" he shouted. "What do you mean? Exhibiting yourself and making a fool of an officer and a gentleman, an Admiral wearing His Majesty King George of England's uniform. What do you mean, I say, insulting the flag and British officers? Not fit to dust their shoes. Everyone knows what you were—a kept girl turned fine lady. . . ."

The large hand of Captain Troubridge muffled further words. Consternation showed on the faces of the company; Emma laughed, but her cheeks were white. Admiral Nelson stood stuffily with his head high, watching Josiah carried away. In a moment the band struck up; Sir William and Cornelia Knight opened the ball.

Guests closed around Emma. The Italians laughed and spoke of the potency of old wine on callow heads; the English, looking pained and self-conscious, admired the sea-green marble of the rostral column. "The column shall never come down while Sir Will'um and I remain in Naples," Emma loudly asserted.

The moment attention relaxed she slipped to the back of the crowd and sought escape. At the door she brushed past the Marchese di Gallo and the Cavaliere Don Ottavio Caracciolo, Governor of the Albergo de' Poveri. They laughed meaningly. "*In vino veritas*," said the Cavaliere in a tone intended for her to hear.

Emma found sanctuary in the small book-lined chamber looking down upon Vico Santa Maria. The windows were rarely opened, and the warm air smelt fustily of crumbling leather and vellum: a friendly

odour, and strangely comforting. She felt her way into the *galleria* projecting into the pitch-black night; a red lamp floating in the darkness illumined the bowed head and crossed hands of the Madonna kneeling in a shrine. Presently Emma heard the door of the room open; it remained ajar while the intruder peered within. She kept her head averted and made no sound; from the distant ball-room penetrated the lively music of the *Cosaque*.

"Lady Hamilton?" Emma wheeled about, recognizing the nasal intonation.

"I'm here," she whispered.

Admiral Nelson shut the door; she heard him cautiously cross the dark, unfamiliar room. In a moment he stood beside her in the narrow embrasure.

"My Lady, I am ashamed and bitterly, bitterly sorry!"

Her answer was long in coming. "He was drunk," she said gently, "but he hurt me."

"After all your goodness to us! My God! I would Josiah had left me to perish at Santa Cruz rather than save me to feel such shame for him."

"Don't grieve; all quickly passes and is forgotten. And 'tis true, what Josiah said. I was Sir Will'um's mistress for nearly five years before he wed me, and kept girl of his nephew long before that—everyone in Naples knows it. The only harm was reminding them of dishonour I'd nearly lived down."

"Dishonour? It could never touch you! If any shame there was, it belonged to the man who betrayed you. Did you love him very much, My Lady?"

"Greville? Yes, I loved him—better than he did me, else he could not have broke my heart. He'd have died sooner. But 'tis all long over, and the past's forgotten had not Josiah reminded me."

"What can I do to atone—I, who respect you so truly, so deeply?"

He took her hand and carried it to his lips. He kissed it, and, still clasping her fingers, allowed her hand to fall; then, bending his head, he kissed her hand again, lingeringly and often. Wild excitement possessed Emma, but she hardly breathed. Her eyes were fixed on the face of the plaster Madonna—so simpering by daylight, so seductive in the pulsing red glow of a votive-lamp.

Sir Horatio heaved a deep sigh. "I suppose we must go back—back to all those damned people."

Emma led the way across the small, friendly room. She turned the

knob and the door swung open, revealing a black-and-white marble vestibule lit by a hanging bronze lamp from Pompeii and a flight of stairs leading down to a little courtyard where a fountain splashed.

Admiral Nelson paused on the threshold. "Lady Hamilton, your kind heart forgives, but I feel I can never forget the injury that's been done."

"You make too much of it," Emma murmured.

"Perhaps I do, but—well, never mind!" Making a gesture of dismissal he walked with his usual jaunty bearing into the little courtyard. "After all," he said, "Josiah is not my son."

The ball lasted until the small hours, and the household at Palazzo Sessa remained late in bed on Sunday morning. Sir Horatio, whose customary hour of rising was four or five o'clock, attended Divine Service in the *Vanguard*, and had not yet returned when Emma and Sir William met for breakfast. Emma was fully dressed, but the Minister was garbed in a tasselled cap and an embroidered robe too short to hide his long linen night-gown. His gaunt, lined face was yellow, and he refused with a wry grimace Emma's offering of cherry conserve. "Tea and a slice of lemon, my dear—and I doubt if I shall keep that down!" Rising, he went to a pier-glass and examined the whites of his eyes. "Yellow as a guinea," he reported, returning to his chair. "Well, Em, we're poorer, or more in debt, by two thousand ducats as a result of our entertainments yesterday. I think our attentions pleased our gallant friend, and to afford him pleasure I should be very willing to incur even greater liabilities. I suppose you were upset by the disgraceful scene made by that young cub, Nisbet?"

"Of course I was!"

"I shouldn't take it to heart. 'Tis not as if ye made any secret of your former way of life," he comforted with candour, "and everyone knows of your exemplary behaviour as my mistress and as my wife. Certainly the Neapolitan nobility will not pass judgment, as nearly every man is a rogue and all the women strumpets. The one who is placed in an invidious position is Nelson, and I am sorry for it. Nisbet is not a man of family. To be drunk, and yet remain a gentleman, can only be achieved by breeding."

Admiral Nelson came in while they still sat at table. He went straight to the point. "I've seen Josiah," he said, "and he will come at four o'clock to apologize for his scandalous behaviour last night.

I myself shall see that he is punished, but nothing I can do will wipe out the shame I feel over his conduct—I am thankful that none of my blood runs in his veins. But I feel the abuse of your hospitality so sensibly that I must request to be allowed to go to an hotel for the remainder of my stay in Naples. Believe me, Sir, I would rather Josiah had cut off this other arm with his sword than that he should have made a thrust at Lady Hamilton, whom I revere as a model of her sex.”

“Come, come, my dear Nelson—the incident is unimportant. A young man in his cups is more an object for ridicule than censure. Josiah certainly behaved in an ungentlemanlike manner, and the best thing we can do, as men of breeding, is to forget the occurrence as speedily as possible.”

“That can better be done after Josiah has apologized.”

“That is where we disagree—let there be no apology. The best way to get over anything distressing and unalterable is to ignore it. I say this both as a diplomat and as an old man-of-the-world. Everything in this life can be made tolerable by turning a blind eye upon it, and that I advise you to do, my dear Nelson, on this and every other provoking occasion. As to leaving us—I will not hear of it, and neither will Lady Hamilton. Emma, my love, pour out a cup of tea for Sir Horatio, and while ye drink it, my dear Sir, ye will regale us with Captain Foley’s latest news of Buonaparte—Tom Allen informs me that the *Goliath* has arrived from Egypt.”

“There is little to relate from that quarter. My only news concerns the white bird—it flew, or vanished, from my cabin last night at about the time Lady Hamilton unveiled the rostral column.”

“I am sorry!” Emma’s voice was deeply regretful.

“Let us hope,” remarked Sir William, “that it does not join the wild pigeons in flight at this season of the year. Just now netting them is Ferdinando’s favourite *chasse*, and I don’t think the white swallow, however magical, would have much chance against him.”

Emma said reproachfully: “You’re laughing, Sir Will’um!”

Unwilling to be quizzed, Sir Horatio abruptly changed the subject: “Captain Murray of the *Colossus*, who brought the convoy from Gibraltar, very handsomely offers to assist Ball in the blockade of Malta till some of the other ships under my orders may be ready. As Murray must rejoin the Commander-in-Chief at no distant date, it might be a good opportunity to embark your packing-cases. He

expects the *Colossus* will sail for England in December; in any event, once the cases are at Gibraltar it will be no difficult matter to tranship them."

"If Captain Murray would be so good as to take even a part of my collection it would be an infinite relief to me. There can be no doubt of the French army's intention to plunder the rest of Italy as soon as they shall be in sufficient force, and in this they will certainly succeed if the Emperor and the King of Naples continue to procrastinate. Then Emma and I and all our property must be involved in the general ruin."

"I'll speak to Murray. I think you can count the business as settled."

That afternoon Sir William drove the Admiral and Emma to the Palace of Portici and the excavations at Herculaneum. Acting as cicerone, the British Minister led the way through labyrinthine galleries cut in the lava by King Carlo. "Since Ferdinando's tenure digging has continued, but with less spirit and expenditure; indeed, the collection of curiosities brought out of this city and Pompeii is already so considerable that a relaxation of zeal and activity becomes excusable." As he spoke Sir William suddenly came to a standstill. Taking a penknife from his pocket, he dug into the lava wall, and soon unearthed a gold ring set with an intaglio.

"This looks something rare," he muttered with satisfaction. It was too dark in the gully to examine the find, but on emerging into the open Sir William at once recognized the subject. "Cupido, called Eros by the Greeks. Here he is, blindfolded and armed with a bow and a quiver full of arrows—just as we know him this day. Take it, my dear Nelson—you are more like to suffer from Cupid's shafts than I, who am far too old for his attentions."

Sir Horatio accepted the trinket and looked at it longingly. "But shouldn't it go to the King?"

"Oh—tut, my dear fellow! His Majesty has no feeling for *virtù*—such interest as he displays is due to my example. The work I have expended on the royal collection fully entitles me to an honorarium now and again. Such reward I now take pleasure in transferring to *nostro liberatore*."

The Admiral still hesitated. "Lady Hamilton, the ring should be yours."

Emma took it and slipped it for a moment on her finger, then,

smiling, she dropped it into his palm. "Cupido flies to you," she said.

The bridge of La Madalena and San Gennaro's statue were bathed in the turquoise light of evening when the carriage crossed the Sebeto. The gloomy walls of Castel del Carmine and the tall tower of Santa Maria were projected out of common perspective. Flat and razor-edged, they were patterns devoid of substance.

A church bell struck twenty-three times. "Five minutes to six, English," Emma translated.

"I fear," said Sir William urbanely, "that we shall have missed Josiah."

They drove home along the quays and past the salt-water lake of Porto Piccolo, where they saw the King sculling in a boat after the gulls he had shot during the afternoon. From the Immacolatella the causeway skirted Porto Grande, where the *Vanguard* and *Sannite* were anchored. A row of fine houses faced the harbour, the largest being the French Legation. The arms of the Republic were over the door and the tricolour flew from a staff uprising above the balustrade.

"Monsieur La Combe de St. Michel is evidently come," Sir William observed. "It is a curious moment for the arrival of an Ambassador from the French Republic!"

"An understanding must be come to with this Government; they must be made to see where their interests lie." Admiral Nelson spoke forcibly. "If they cannot see for themselves, it will be my duty to tell them, in the strong language of an English Admiral, plain truths of their miserable system. I will not say or do anything without your approbation, Sir William, but anger is necessary. You, Your Excellency, are *much too good to them*. The words of the great William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, must be instilled into the Ministry of this country—'The boldest measures are the safest'."

"Or, as I frequently tell the King and Acton: *Audendo agendoque res publica crescit—non iis consiliis quæ timidi cauta appellant.*"

Several stormy scenes ensued between the victor of the Nile and the Marchese di Gallo, the Neapolitan Minister emerged evasive and unruffled—unlike Admiral Nelson, whose irritation brought a recurrence of fever, racking headaches and sickness resultant from his wound.

"I do not understand the Foreign Minister," he said in a voice querulous with pain; "we are different men. He has been bred in

a Court, and I in a rough element, but I believe my heart is as susceptible to the finer feelings as his, and as compassionate for the distresses of those who look to me for protection."

On the 3rd of October he accompanied Sir William and Emma to the palace at the request of the Queen. Still shaken by spasms of ague, Her Majesty received them in a small closet off her bedroom. Claspng Sir Horatio's hand in both of hers she exclaimed: "I have longed for this moment to assure you of my gratitude, deeply engraven on my heart. Your victory is so complete that I could not believe it, were it not that the English nation is accustomed to perform prodigies by sea. I grieve to see you looking ill and worn as a result of your exertions."

"Your Majesty would not say that if you had seen me as I first arrived—it required all the kindness of my friends to set me up."

"And what a pleasure it has been!" Emma supplemented. "But Sir Horatio will fret over his anxiety for Naples. He thinks as we do, Ma'am, that a blow should be struck at the French in the Pope's dominions while they are still disheartened by the victory of the Nile."

"Ah, my dear Admiral, if you can impose this truth on His Majesty and our Ministers, you will achieve the liberation of all Italy; this is my firm belief. Now is the vital moment for a bold stroke, and I trust it will be made by General Mack, who is hourly expected from Vienna."

"Then, Ma'am, may I claim your support when I, as an honest seaman, speak plain truths to His Majesty?"

"All that is humanely possible I will do, but in friendship I must warn you that there is a factor which cannot be overcome without further sympathetic aid from England. Money is indispensable. In our present difficulties we cannot prosecute a war of more than a few months. Will Great Britain see this Monarchy destroyed? Is not our trade most advantageous to your country?"

"At this moment I do not think Mr. Pitt would go to Parliament and ask for money, but—and I think Sir William Hamilton will agree with me—if England saw every exertion made by the people of this Kingdom, John Bull would not be backward in supporting his friends in distress."

"I venture to prophesy that a vigorous policy against the treacherous enemy is the best and only chance of receiving a subsidy or guarantee from Great Britain."

"Then I shall urge a bold attack, my dear Chevalier, always relying upon the proved magnanimity of Great Britain."

Early on the following morning eight of Sir William's packing-cases were taken on board the *Colossus*. The boxes were so large that Captain Murray could accommodate no more. "Later I'll find a means of getting the rest to safety," Admiral Nelson assured his host; "let Murray take the cases that you value most."

Which those were evoked a heated argument between Emma and Sir William. "My dear Em, you must allow me to know which are which—the cream of my collection are in the cases lying in the long gallery; the others in the octagon room contain black vases without figures."

"Sir Will'um, they've all been moved round since we packed them. Don't you remember we put the best vases in dirty cases to deceive robbers?"

"Nonsense! nonsense! I should never dream of doing so!"

"Sir Will'um, I know what I'm saying!"

"I must beg to differ, Emma! Now, my men," he said, addressing the lackeys waiting to carry his treasures, "take the new cases, and handle them with the utmost care!"

Emma was so angry that she left the scene and stamped upstairs. Passing the open door of the mirror-room, she saw Sir Horatio writing on a sheet of paper that was kept in place by a heavy glass weight. At the sound of her footsteps he looked up and smiled.

"Lady Hamilton, I was just wishing for you. Here is a letter in Italian that I cannot read. Though 'tis probably from some fool who only wants to waste my time, I am uneasy until I know what it's about."

"I'm glad I'm of some use to somebody!" she said spiritedly. "I declare I'm so cross I'm nearly bursting my girdle. Would you believe it? Sir Will'um sending his poor vases in the *Colossus* because he's forgotten which cases hold the best, and won't listen to me! 'Twould serve him right to lose his treasures by being so stubborn. I love Sir Will'um tenderly, but he's getting provoking, as old people do. I might be a little girl without sense, the way he treats me now. Sometimes I think I'll run away or drown myself," she solemnly declared.

He sprang up and placed himself on the seat beside her. "Lady Hamilton—my dear Lady—this is terrible! I always thought you and

Sir William were happy together—ideally happy, as all men and women hope to be when they marry. . . .”

“We are happy—I wouldn’t have you think otherwise for worlds—but we aren’t wedded any more as we used to be. . . .” She hesitated, biting her full red lip in an attempt to keep back tears, which nevertheless brimmed over and rolled down her flushed cheeks. “We don’t share the same room. Sir Will’um sleeps badly and likes to read half the night, and I dream and fling about—that’s how we are. But I shouldn’t have told you!” Jumping up, she walked to the desk and picked up the Italian letter. “Now I’ll sit down and translate this while you go on with your work, for we’ll soon have to get ready to dine with the King on board the *Sannite*.”

Admiral Nelson took her hand: “Don’t be sorry that you told me, Lady Hamilton. I feel—how shall I say it?—very honoured that you confide in me.”

Emma ruefully shook her head. “Sir Will’um would be hurt if he knew I’d told. He is the best husband, and friend; I wish I could say father also. I should be too happy if I had the blessing of children. But I must be content.”

With abrupt movement the Admiral kissed her hand and turned on his heel. “I will finish my letter to Lord St. Vincent,” he said huskily; “there’s not much more to say.”

Emma responded on a casual note. “I must get on too! This Italian wants to sell you some barrels of pitch and a lot of cordage. . . .”

“The devil he does!” With a great air of concentration Admiral Nelson took up his pen and continued from the point of interruption:

“. . . *Culloden* is getting forward, Troubridge is indefatigable: none but he could have saved poor *Culloden*. We all dine this day with the King on board a Ship, he is very attentive. I have been with the Queen, she is truly a daughter of Maria Theresa. I am writing opposite Lady Hamilton, therefore you will not be surprised at the glorious jumble of this letter. Were your Lordship in my place, I much doubt if you could write so well; our hearts and our hands must be all in a flutter. Naples is a dangerous place, and we must keep clear of it.

I am, &c.

Horatio Nelson.

By inviting Sir Horatio Nelson, and the Captains of ten British ships of war lying at anchor in the port, to dine on board the *Sannite*,

King Ferdinando contrived to be both hospitable and neutral. His Majesty, the Hereditary Prince and young Prince Leopold received the company, each taking every opportunity to express their eternal gratitude to the victors of the Nile. Emma was the only female guest; she sat between Admiral Nelson and the heir to the throne of the Sicilies, a position which allowed her to cut up meat for the hero and to translate the compliments showered upon him in Italian to an accompaniment of a royal salute of twenty-one guns. The dinner lasted for two hours and ended with Ferdinando proposing the healths of *il Re d'Inghilterra*, of Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson and the brave squadron under his command. Whereupon, with three cheers, according to British Marine custom, the guests drank to Their Sicilian Majesties and all the royal family.

The tables were laid on the quarter-deck in full view of ships in the harbour and houses fronting upon the water. "Have you thought," said Sir William, addressing the King, "what an effect this scene must have on Monsieur La Combe de St. Michel, whose windows have a full view of us?"

"He wisely thinks it better to make no complaint," His Majesty replied with genial unconcern. "Yesterday he presented his credential letters in a polite manner that one doesn't expect from a representative of the Republic."

"Ought not this extraordinary conduct to be seriously noticed by Your Majesty?" Admiral Nelson inquired. "I have remarked with surprise that the Minister of the insolent French has passed over in silence the manifest breach of the third article of the Treaty between Your Majesty and the French Republic. Has not the uniform conduct of the French been to lull Governments into a false sense of security, and then to destroy them?"

"But we shall be ready for them," boasted the King with courage born of champagne. "My army is of different quality from any that has opposed the Republic, and we only wait support from the Emperor to take action."

"I am glad to hear Your Majesty make that decision."

Two days after the royal dinner-party the *Alexander*, *Colossus*, *Terpsichore* and *Bonne Citoyenne* left Naples to take over the blockade of Malta from the Portuguese squadron under the Marquis de Niza. Before Captain Nisbet sailed, Emma effected a reconciliation between the Admiral and his stepson.

"It won't do," she said, "to keep Josiah in disgrace; he'll come to

grief without guidance. Forgive him and let us see if we can make him sober."

"Can you forget what he said?" Sir Horatio inquired.

"I can't forget, but I can overlook it. If every wrong thing I did at his age was counted up against me, I should be having a miserable time."

"Lady Hamilton, you are an angel!"

Sir William, Emma and Admiral Nelson climbed up to the Legation roof to watch the ships sail. They found Mrs. Cadogan already there, waving a white table-cloth, a salutation answered from the deck of the *Alexander*. "There," she said triumphantly, "that's my good Captain Ball. He said he'd wave if I did, but I told him he'd forget all about old mother Cadogan the moment his ship was ready for sea."

"Well, Ma'am, that's the last you're like to see of him for a full due," said the Admiral. "Naples sees this squadron no more, except the King calls for our help."

Emma looked at him earnestly. "Do you mean that?"

"Ay; such kindness as we have received here would soon make us unfit for hard service. And Naples Bay is a bad spot for ships to refit in, being subject, as you know, to a heavy swell."

"When do you think the *Vanguard* will be ready to sail?" Emma inquired in a flat voice.

"Next week—I hope!"

General Mack reached Naples on the 9th of October with five loaded carriages, and drove to Caserta, where the royal family had gone to await Princess Clementina's lying-in. Sir Horatio, walking up from the arsenal, saw the cavalcade drawn up outside the palace and was unfavourably impressed. "He had a special cooking-stove mounted on a waggon and another carriage fitted with a bed; a general requiring so many comforts must find himself unequal to the fag of active service. I have formed my opinion, and heartily pray I may be mistaken."

"Their Majesties invite us to meet the General at dinner on Thursday," Sir William answered; "then you can study him at close quarters. At present I feel with you that a generalissimo who travels like a King is an unpromising campaigner."

Warm, sunny weather had come to an end, and they drove to Caserta through steady rain and a landscape swathed in mist. The white travertine walls of the Royal Palace were blotched with damp,

gutters overflowing through the mouths of gargoyles, added to the noise of tumbling water splashing in grey spate down the cascades.

A warm welcome from the Sovereigns mitigated a chilly impression left on the minds of the visitors by Vanvitelli's marble arcade. After the King had introduced the English Admiral and the Austrian General to each other, the Queen addressed her countryman: "General, be to us by land what my hero, Nelson, has been by sea!"

"Your Majesty, supply me with the troops, and I will do the rest!"

General Mack wore a white uniform jacket, frogged with gold, and gartered white breeches; he carried under his arm a tall, cylindrical cap wound around with a very narrow bag-tail ending in a gold tassel. He was forty-six, of a dark, saturnine countenance which well accorded with a cold, grave manner, frugal speech and a habit of letting out each word by itself in oracular form. At the conclusion of the repast the King took Sir William to see the hunting mastiffs, and Emma was invited to visit the Hereditary Princess in a distant part of the palace. Arm in arm with the Queen, she set off on a lengthy walk through marble galleries and arcades.

"Alone together, Mack and the brave hero Nelson can devise plans for the final overthrow of the infamous enemy. All is now in our favour," Carolina announced. "The Emperor desires my husband to begin and he will support him; by our courier from Constantinople we are informed that the Porte has declared war against the French; the Russians seem likewise coming into line, and, through the exertions of the noble English, Malta must soon return under our flag. Miledi, we are in sight of a turn of the tide, thanks to the great sea victory of the Nile!"

"*Viva il Turko!*" Emma exclaimed. "Now the French are opposed by so many nations, surely they must soon be beat. I would our great Admiral were coming back to give advice. Ma'am, do you know that Naples is to see our ships no more?"

"Miledi, you fill me with alarm! All our plans depend upon a strong British squadron off our coast. What would become of us if the Jacobins began a revolution? The guns of Britain alone keep the rebels in their lairs."

"Ma'am, will you ask Admiral Nelson to come back—as a personal favour?"

Something in Emma's tone made the Queen give her a sharp look. "How outstanding he is!" Carolina said inconsequently. "As I listen to him my mind says: 'So Julius Caesar addressed the Romans,

spurring them to conquest.' Were I younger, Miledi, the gallant Admiral would capture my heart."

"Indeed there's no one like him," Emma agreed; "'twould be impossible to act a coward's part when he stands commanding with his left arm outstretched, speaking the language of truth."

The Queen suddenly came to a standstill. "My dear friend, we will postpone our visit to my dear daughter-in-law; instead, I'll see the King and inform him of the brave Admiral's intention to withdraw his ships. His Majesty should know of this before he hears the conclusions reached by the two Commanders. He will be as anxious as we are for the Chevalier Horatio to remain, and a request from the King must carry weight."

"Ma'am, you are good to me!"

"My only pleasure is to render service to my friends, and I would aid you to every happiness that your heart and excellent qualities deserve."

While the Queen hurried off on her mission, Emma wandered into the theatre and sat down in the empty auditorium. The walls were of peach-blossomed marble from Puglia, Verde of Calabria formed pillars between richly decorated boxes, antique alabaster columns supported a painted ceiling. The magnificence of her surroundings made a fitting setting for Emma's dreams, which were of a heroic nature worthy of the stage. Battles, conquests, escapes merged one into the other before her enchanted vision: ships and armies appeared and vanished; scenes changed; two figures remained in the foreground—a hero and a lovely woman. . . .

Prince Leopold called her thrice before she answered. "The great Admiral and the Cavaliere are preparing to go," the boy announced. "Our Liberator is to give me a picture of himself, and I shall stand in front of it and say a prayer that I may grow up like him."

"That you'll never do!" Emma replied with crushing finality.

On the drive home Admiral Nelson discussed plans and impressions made during the council with General Mack. "He says he will march in ten days into the Roman State, and keep advancing, trusting to the support of the Emperor. According to the late treaty between the Courts of Vienna and Naples, the Emperor must furnish double the number of troops put into the field by Ferdinando."

"That is most satisfactory," Sir William observed. "But what the Neapolitan recruits can do against seasoned French troops no one knows, or ventures to prophesy."

"One can only hope that Mack's confidence will prove well founded—he is active and has an intelligent eye. He will do well, I have no doubt." Admiral Nelson's tone belied his words.

"The glorious victory of the 1st of August seems to inspire all with courage."

"The Queen never lacked it," Emma interjected.

Sir Horatio's response was enthusiastic as a partisan could desire. "She is a true daughter of Maria Theresa. General Mack agrees with me to place our confidence solely in the Queen and Acton the moment war begins. For I have promised to return to Naples in the first week in November to be useful in the movements of their army—thus I give up my plan to destroy the French shipping in Egypt. I suspect that Their Majesties wish to keep an English man-of-war in Naples Bay as an insurance against mishap, when they would feel their persons much safer under the British Flag than under any other."

"How happy you will have made my adored Queen!" Emma said in heartfelt tones; "how happy you have made all of us!"

"I am sure you will do me justice with Her Majesty, for I declare to God that my whole study is how best to meet her approbation. All my views are to serve and save the Two Sicilies when the country is at war, and to do what the King and Queen may wish me—even against my own opinion."

Admiral Nelson's last evening ashore was spent *en famille* at Palazzo Sessa. Emma performed his favourite Attitudes, afterwards she sang her own version of:

*"See the conquering Hero comes!
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums,
Spoils prepared, the Laurel bring,
Songs of Triumph to him sing.*

*See our gallant Nelson comes,
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums,
Sports prepare, the Laurel bring,
Songs of Triumph, Emma, sing!
Myrtle-wreath and roses twine
To deck the Hero's brow divine."*

The victor's cries of applause were as loud as Sir William's. "Lady Hamilton, you should be our King's Poet Laureate, I am sure you

could do justice to England's great events far better than the weaklings who generally take up verse for a livelihood."

"Speaking of the King," said Sir William, "we should soon be hearing through Earl Spencer what award His Majesty makes for your signal services to the Crown. One can surmise what it will be, taking as a standard dignities conferred for other great actions fought this war. For the Battle of St. Vincent Sir John Jervis obtained an Earldom; for Camperdown Admiral Duncan was made a Viscount, being two steps in the peerage for each; neither victory was so complete nor so important to Britain and to Europe as that of the Nile."

"I should be disappointed to receive a less honour than a Viscounty," Sir Horatio quietly answered. "I wish I could hear from my Commander-in-Chief—his silence makes me apprehend some disaster to the *Leander*. Had Captain Berry delivered the dispatches I must have heard from Lord St. Vincent long ere this."

"The delay certainly arouses misgiving—happily, your foresight in sending Capel overland to England ensures the glorious news being known now in London. I hope the Admiralty took an early opportunity to dispel Lady Nelson's anxiety, which must have been acute."

"Fanny has a calm disposition, unlike mine, which is prone to extremes. I am sure not one of my Captain's wives awaited so quietly the results of our meeting with the enemy as did Lady Nelson."

"Courage and calm are ideal qualities in a sea officer's spouse," Sir William returned, "but when you are together I'm sure you rouse her up. I suspect yours was an ardent wooing, and I'll wager 'twas love at first sight?"

"I'll give you the answer I gave the Duke of Clarence just before my marriage, when we were both young Captains serving on the Leeward Island Station. His Royal Highness used to say he believed I was married, for he never saw a lover so easy or saying so little of the object of his regard, and that it must be esteem I felt for my betrothed, and not what is vulgarly called love. I replied: 'You are right: my love is founded on esteem, the only foundation that can make the passion last.'"

"And have ye found that theory work in practice?" Sir William inquired.

The Minister's inflexion caused the Admiral to look up suspiciously, but Sir William's face was blank, and he seemed interested only in the movement of his quizzing-glass swinging from his finger.

"Yes," Sir Horatio answered in a tone resembling defiance. "That

theory has worked. My unabated and steady affection has, if possible, increased through the propriety of conduct which Lady Nelson pursues."

Emma stood on the balcony, a still, silent figure dressed in the white robe she wore for the Attitudes. Her Grecian profile was chiselled against the star-spangled sky, her neck and arms were bare, the rich curves of her breasts were defined by golden cords crossed and tied under her bosom. The Admiral's gaze was drawn by the beauty of her pose; suddenly she turned her head and met his look. Her shining eyes seemed to grow larger and to cast warm and tender beams. Advancing into the archway, she stood with outstretched hands resting against the stone reveals.

"I am wondering," she said, "how we shall go on without you? For we seem—you, Sir Will'um and I—to be a trio that ought not to separate."

"*Tria juncta in uno*," her husband responded, "the legend round the Cross of the Bath that Nelson and I both wear—three persons linked together by one tie of differing affections."

"That is what I like to think," Admiral Nelson answered, flushing with pleasure.

"'Tis a glad omen," Emma declared, "particularly for the happiness of Sir Will'um and myself, who love you, admire you and glory in your friendship. *Tria juncta in uno*. I shall say the words as a talisman morning and night until you come back to us."

Admiral Nelson gravely responded:

"And so will I!"

Sir William's chair as he rose slid with an impatient squeak along the marble floor. "Lud!" he said, "how sentimental we are becoming!"



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

IN the evening of November the 5th Rear-Admiral Nelson returned to Naples from Malta after an absence of three weeks. He landed immediately at the mole and set off in the British Envoy's carriage for Caserta. Emma and Sir William, jaded after twelve hours as guests at the Princess's confinement, received him in gala dress.

"Thank God," said Sir William, "etiquette now allows us to return to Naples. To be so cut off from news in these stirring times is a very real deprivation—and an inconvenience. Did ye receive safely Captain Thompson's melancholy account of the *Leander's* capture by *Le Généreux* off Candia on the 18th of August?"

"Yes, and I found it a mortifying and unfortunate consequence of the French ships escaping us at the Nile—but we shall have them yet! Poor Thompson was denied possession of his cot after being severely wounded in a gallant and almost unprecedented defence made under great disparity of force. I hope both he and Captain Berry are now well on their journey to England."

"It makes one's heart bleed for what both officers must have suffered—the only satisfaction is Captain Berry's presence of mind in destroying the dispatches."

"Now let's talk of something happier," Emma exclaimed. "And what could that be but your presents on their way from the Grand Signior. Did you get my letters telling all about the *Chelengk* or Plume of Triumph? You didn't? Then I shall have the pleasure of saying it over again!"

"Lady Hamilton, begin quickly, for I am all impatience."

"Your present is a *pelliccia* of sables with a feather of diamonds for your hat, large, most magnificent! Two thousand zechins for the wounded men and a letter to you from the Grand Signior, God bless him! How I long to show him our gratitude for the justice done to the friend of our hearts, for so Sir Will'um and I call you!"

"Emma is delighted with the idea of seeing you garbed as an Eastern potentate," Sir William said, with an indulgent smile. "We understand that the diamond aigrette was taken from one of the Imperial turbans and is a sign of sovereignty. A request to permit your wearing it has been sent to King George."

"It certainly is very handsome in the Grand Signior," said the Admiral, with pleasure in his voice, "and I should be sorry if I am denied the means of showing my gratitude."

Emma's elbows were propped on the table, her eager face rested on her clasped hands. "If I was King of England," she announced emphatically, "I would make you the most noble present, Duke Nelson, Marquis Nile, Earl Aboukir, Viscount Pyramid, Baron Crocodile and Prince Victory, that posterity might have you in all forms."

"I don't deserve so much as that," Sir Horatio answered seriously, "though it makes me happy that your Ladyship should think so!"

"Not all we have to tell is so agreeable," Sir William remarked. "His Imperial Majesty seems in two minds how to act, and messages received through Monsieur Baptiste, the Neapolitan *Chargé d'Affaires* at Vienna, are often contradicted by letters coming direct from the Emperor's Ministers. It is clear to me that Vienna cannot be counted on, and His Sicilian Majesty will have to make up his mind to help himself. In justice I must say he seems resolved to do so, and marches the day after to-morrow, joining General Mack at the great camp at San Germano. I have seen a list of the army in three columns which, on paper, makes an astonishing appearance. There are more than sixty battalions of infantry and thirty squadrons of cavalry."

"That sounds very well, but I must say that numbers count for nothing with me. Has Monsieur La Combe de St. Michel received his *congé*?"

"Far from it! The Arms of the French and Cisalpine Republics are still firmly in place over the doors of the Legations, but General Acton has given me two important pieces of information that one would think must drive this Government to action. Monsieur Bouligny, the Spanish *Chargé d'Affaires*, recently sent the Marchese di Gallo a letter in Spanish from the Spanish Ministry threatening this Court if they *make war* with the French Republic, and the letter *came by a French messenger*! The other item concerned a Neapolitan merchant vessel captured by a French one and taken to Hyères, there to be declared a good prize, the French Republic *being*

at war with Naples! All this made General Acton apprehensive of a Spanish squadron from Carthage.

"This Kingdom is certainly in great difficulty, but I should feel for them more if the Ministers were not fiddlers—the Marquis di Gallo in particular. Their total indifference and neglect of the inhabitants of Malta appear to me cruel in the extreme. Despite the assurances given by Gallo and General Acton in our various conversations, nothing has been sent to the island by Della Torre, the Governor of Siracusa, and I am convinced he never had any orders to dispatch the smallest article. Had not the English supplied ammunition and kept the spirits of the brave islanders from falling off, they must long ago have bowed to the French yoke."

"You astound me!"

"At one time there was only four days' bread in the island—luckily we captured a vessel loaded with wheat for the garrison and sent her into St. Paul's. I repeat it, but for our exertions the Maltese must long ago have been overpowered. His Sicilian Majesty claims the island, but what has he done? At least two thousand small arms should be sent for defence, much more for offence."

"At what do you estimate the force required to take the island?"

"Two or three large mortars, fifteen hundred shells, perhaps a few artillery, two ten-inch howitzers with a thousand shells, and a Commander of judgment, bravery and activity. He should be the first to lead the Maltese to glory, and the last, when necessary, to retreat. Such, many such, are to be found. If he succeeds, promise him rewards; my life for it, the business would soon be over!"

"I doubt if heroes are so plentiful in this domain, nor if Italians as fighters are a match for the French."

"A firm opponent has the same effect upon Republicans as upon the generality of men, as was proved at Gozo on the 28th, when the garrison surrendered to our friend Ball upon his threatening to batter down the castle. At this moment the *Vanguard* and the *Minotaur* have on board two hundred and thirty French prisoners awaiting the King's pleasure."

"That is the way to do business," Sir William remarked admiringly.

"'Tis wonderful to hear of things being accomplished, and not just talked about!" Emma elaborated.

"I wish I saw a firm line being taken here; the miserable conduct of

this Court is not likely to cool my irritable temper. It is a country of fiddlers and poets, whores and scoundrels."

"Her Majesty must be exempted. A *femme galante* she may be; a woman of courage and vision she undoubtedly is," said Sir William. "Anyway, we must do the best we can, as my instructions from Lord Grenville make it clear that cordial and unlimited support is to be given to our Royal Master's allies. The new treaty between Great Britain and the Two Sicilies is expected by the next Neapolitan messenger—I told ye by letter that our Government has already promised to keep a permanent British fleet in the Mediterranean."

"My heart is true to the good cause, and no exertion of mine shall be wanting."

Yawning, Emma got up. "Oh, let's to bed and talk more in the morning. I feel fit to drop after the day we have had, and only a princess at the end of it!"

"At this Court," Sir William explained to Admiral Nelson, "a royal birth is a function to which the privileged are invited; guests amuse themselves playing cards and games outside the screens that hide the bed."

"And we were there from before breakfast, all dressed in gala, as you see," said Emma, spreading out her lace skirt.

At noon on the following day Admiral Nelson and Sir William had an audience with King Ferdinando; earlier in the morning Emma ran across the park to see the Queen, and returned with a vivid account of the visit.

"Dear Maria Carolina is desperate on account of the weak and cool acting of the Cabinet of Vienna. The latest letters from her son-in-law and daughter are cold, unfriendly, mistrustful, Frenchified, saying plainly 'help yourselves'. Oh, the Emperor is but a poor sop, a machine in the hands of his corrupt Ministers. I flatter myself I did much, for while the Queen was despondent and agitated, I got up, and, putting out my left arm like you do, Sir Horatio, I painted the drooping situation of this fine country, her friends sacrificed, her husband, children and herself led to the block. I said: 'Your memory will be eternally dishonoured if you do not fight bravely to the last to save your country and religion from falling into the hands of the rapacious murderers of your sister and the royal family of France. Now is the time to strike,' I told her, 'while all minds are impressed by the horrors their neighbours are suffering from these robbers.'"

"Well done! Lady Hamilton, well done!" Sir Horatio's voice was warmly approving. "If you could plant your spirit into these wavering people I should feel no doubt of a speedy and victorious end to aggression in Italy."

"Then we had the King in, and held a council," Emma continued. "'Tis decided he is to go with the army, and not to return. The regency is to be in the name of the Prince Royal, but the Queen will direct *all*. Her head is worth a thousand!"

"She is a remarkable woman," the Admiral agreed.

He had even greater reason for thinking so after his audience at the palace. "Her Majesty joined us towards the end of our conversations," he told Emma, "and I fear I am drawn into a promise that Naples Bay shall never be left without an English man-of-war. I never intended leaving the coast without one; but if I had, who could withstand the request of such a Queen?"

Emma smiled agreement. "Indeed there is no one like her—she is a Queen of Hearts."

Duty compelled Sir Horatio to return that same evening to Naples, but he rejoined Emma and Sir William on November the 11th and accompanied them to the camp at San Germano. A mimic battle was fought for the Admiral's edification. General Mack, seated on a white charger, led half his army to an attack on the remainder. Seated in carriages drawn up on an adjacent hill, Their Majesties the King and Queen of Naples, the British Admiral, members of the Court and the Diplomatic Corps looked down on the new levies performing intricate evolutions on the dusty plain. Both Sovereigns were enchanted by the brave deportment of the troops.

"Look!" cried Maria Carolina. "They keep in step as if they had been marching for years on a parade-ground."

"They are splendid, worthy of our fine country," Ferdinando complacently agreed.

Sir Horatio appeared less impressed. Jumping up from his seat in the royal carriage, he looked through his telescope, muttering to Emma as he did so: "This fellow does not understand his business. In directing the operations he is surrounding his own troops by those of the supposed enemy!"

The *contretemps* was unobserved by Their Majesties, who, at the conclusion of the mock battle, enthusiastically complimented the generalissimo.

"We have seen the art of war carried out in all its perfection," Fer-

dinando exclaimed; "with such precision of movement, foresight and boldness I can confidently look forward to the success of my soldiers in any encounter with the French."

"Your Majesty may rest assured of that," said General Mack. Dismounted and standing by the royal carriage, he looked a splendid figure of martial pomp in his white-and-gold uniform. "Yours, Sire, is *la plus belle armée d'Europe*. I only lament that it will not have an enemy to encounter more worthy of its prowess."

The statement surprised Admiral Nelson and Sir William, but they had no opportunity for discussion until late in the evening, when walking from the camp to join Emma at the guest house of Monte Casino.

"Didn't ye think it an astonishing assertion to be made by a responsible general?" Sir William demanded. "Mack must know that the French are still as formidable as in their more chivalrous time."

"Such boasting made a bad impression on me, especially in conjunction with his unskilful management this morning. However, until it is proved otherwise, I will agree that a finer army cannot be than the one he commands."

"In our recent consultation he showed better understanding. The uncertainty of the Emperor's support seems the only drawback against bold measures, and it is something that all are decided on the advisability of taking Leghorn."

"The Grand Duke, I fancy, begins to *see fear*."

Emma had waiting a hot supper of ham cooked in honey. "What was decided at the Council of War? Was the Queen kept out as she expected?"

"Yes, my dear Em; but I think she had prompted General Mack, for he showed far greater determination than on former occasions. He appears to see clearly the dangers threatening Tuscany, and 'tis settled that four thousand Neapolitan infantry and six hundred cavalry shall be sent to his assistance."

Emma turned beaming eyes upon Sir Horatio. "You mean you will take Leghorn?"

"Lady Hamilton, I will only say that the troops will embark in the *Vanguard*, *Culloden* and *Minotaur*."

"Sir Will'um and I know what that means! You will land and lead the army to victory, and we shall neither eat, drink nor sleep for anxiety until you come back!"

Emma was out betimes the next morning, riding with the Queen,

who wore a blue habit garnished at the neck with gold fleurs-de-lys and fastened with dull gold buttons. On her head was a white plumed generalissimo's hat, a finishing touch to a military *ensemble*. Returning to the camp for breakfast, they found the King and General Acton in earnest conversation with Admiral Nelson and Sir William. Dismay caused His Majesty's face to appear even longer than nature's design.

"What new misfortune has overtaken us?" cried Maria Carolina.

In dramatic despair Ferdinando waved a document above his head. "The courier is come from London and Vienna, and our son-in-law, through Monsieur Thurgut, says the French must be the aggressors before he will support us!"

"*Mein Gott*, the Emperor is a fool! The world knows that the French are collecting an army to over-run Naples; in a week our throne will be lost and our country turned into a Republic. Does Francis wish *that* to happen before coming to our aid?"

"If he waits so long it will be too late," Admiral Nelson dryly responded. "The Emperor's troops have not yet been in the habit of retaking Kingdoms, and it is easier to destroy than to restore."

"We are forsaken by all!" the King declared in tones of abject gloom. "London will give us no money to prosecute a war, and Vienna will not fight for us—we may as well give up before we begin! Alas, my poor children! What will become of them? I care not for myself!"

Admiral Nelson walked briskly up and down the long, narrow tent; his expression betokened extreme irritation. At last he stopped in front of the King. "Your Majesty, at the risk of presumption, I venture to say that one of the following things must happen, and you have your choice: either to advance, trusting to God for His blessing on a just cause, to die *l'épée à la main*, or remain quiet and be kicked out of your Kingdoms."

Ferdinando's face was blankly astonished, his mouth hung open and his heavy, fish-like eyes blinked foolishly.

"Well, if you put it like that, I suppose there is but one thing for me to do—to go on and trust in God."

"Your Majesty has made a courageous decision, and I am sure Sir William Hamilton will support me when I say that John Bull is never backward in assisting his brave friends in distress."

"Then I shall march this day week at the head of my beautiful army," boasted the King as he rattled his sword in its scabbard.

During the morning Admiral Nelson had another conference with General Mack, which delayed the return to Naples. Emma and Sir William went back to the *foresteria*, where they found letters from London delivered by the Neapolitan courier.

"A-ha!—a packet of *Gazettes*," Sir William exclaimed, splitting the wrapper. "Now we shall see what awards have been made to our brave Admiral Nelson. The first is a *London Gazette Extraordinary* dated the 2nd of October announcing the glorious victory to the country. Nothing there! *Gazette* of the 6th of October:

' . . . We, of our especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, have advanced, preferred and created Our trusty and well-beloved Sir Horatio Nelson, Knight of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Rear-Admiral of the Blue Squadron of our Fleet, to the State Degree, Dignity and Honour of Baron Nelson of the Nile, and of Burnham Thorpe, in Our County of Norfolk. . . . '

My God! Could ye have conceived that the country would be guilty of such a paltry and ungenerous award for a victory unparalleled in our history? At this moment I am ashamed of being an Englishman, and if I had my royal foster-brother here, I'd take infinite pleasure in telling him so! "

"I'd do more than that!" said Emma in smouldering fury. "I'd give the King and every Minister in our Government such a drubbing as they'd not forget in a hurry. Hang them, I say! "

"Nelson should have been made a Viscount—the Ministry have been guilty of an injustice that they will have difficulty in explaining."

Sir William sent the *Gazettes* to the camp in order that the Admiral might be apprised of his title before they called for him. He stood outside his tent when they drove up to the cantonment. Both Sir William and Emma descended from the coach and hurried forward. "My Lord Nelson," said Sir William, "I hope we are the first to congratulate you upon the honour accorded for your glorious services, though I am of opinion that even the highest rank in the Peerage would be but a poor acknowledgment of the debt Britain owes to you and the officers and men under your command."

"Nelson, glorious Nelson, had I been King of England I'd have made you a Royal Duke, no less! Good God! If I were in his place there's nothing I'd withhold!" Emma vigorously announced.

"My dear friends, I cannot disguise from you, who know my heart,

that I hoped for an honour equal to others awarded for victories that were certainly no more complete than the Battle of the Nile. But never mind! I receive as I ought what the goodness of our Sovereign, and not my deserts, is pleased to bestow."

San Germano was five posts from Naples, and even with good horses could not be traversed under eight hours. In view of the late start, Sir William proposed breaking the journey at Caserta; a suggestion firmly opposed by Lord Nelson. "I must be on board the *Vanguard* this night. An Admiral's place is his ship, and I return as soon as possible. Deference to Their Sicilian Majesties' wishes alone induced me to quit my post."

That his determination was to avoid sleeping beneath the same roof as herself was apparent to Emma. Since returning from Malta, his manner showed reserve, and he evaded being alone in her company, but visually he was less cautious, and his glance strayed in a rapt manner that revealed more than he supposed.

Dusk fell as they reached Aversa; for eleven miles the coach rumbled through pitch darkness, broken only when tall trees parted and revealed glimpses of Vesuvius burning against the velvet sky.

In compliance with Lord Nelson's wishes, Sir William directed the postilion to make a detour embracing the harbour. By the light of a torch Emma watched the small, lonely figure jauntily walking across the quay to a high-prowed rowing-boat rocking on glassy black water. At the top of the steps he turned to salute and wave his hand, then he vanished, to reappear under the bow lantern of the slowly moving boat, a dim shape crowned by an enormous hat.

On the following morning Emma was dismayed to see that the *Vanguard* had moved to an anchorage off Castel-à-Mare. Sir William was not surprised. "I anticipated that the troops would be embarked from a more secret place than Naples, where every other person is a Jacobin or a French spy."

Disappointment was recorded by Emma's voice. "Perhaps we shall not see Lord Nelson before he sails!"

"I expect him here once at least—there is business to discuss. One British or Portuguese ship of war must remain in the port to take off the royal family and ourselves if the worst comes to the worst. Neither the Queen nor General Acton will trust to the loyalty of the Neapolitan marine."

During the morning Sir William was surprised by a visit from the Marchese di Gallo, whom he believed to be at Caserta. The Foreign

Minister was deputed by Their Majesties again to plead for a subsidy from Great Britain, a request reiterated in a letter from the Queen to Emma. Sir William was noncommittal, and sent an account of the interview to Lord Nelson, which the Admiral acknowledged in person.

"'Tis very clear to me," he said, "that all resistance from this Kingdom must quickly collapse unless Great Britain does the needful. General Acton told me without aid it was impossible for the Neapolitan army to exist more than five months in active service, as the monthly expenses of it was no less than nine hundred thousand ducats, and in that time all the money they had collected for the war would be exhausted."

"The Marchese di Gallo is trying to make a secret article for a subsidy his *sine qua non* of the new treaty," Sir William returned. "I showed the Marquis fairly that by my instructions I was positively prohibited from giving even the smallest hope of such aid by Great Britain; at the same time I ventured to express my belief that His Sicilian Majesty's present vigorous policy was his best recommendation for assistance."

"Things are certainly moving forward—to-morrow morning we receive on board the squadron over five thousand troops for Leghorn."

"When do you sail?" Emma inquired.

"I hope on Thursday—final arrangements depend upon General Naselli, who does not appear to be very decisive a character."

"He's not, but a perfect old fool!" she declared. "And proud as the devil!"

"I've noticed that he appears only to look upon me as an agent for transporting him. But enough—he does not matter! I am more concerned for your safety when I cannot be here to watch over it. Commodore Stone, of Her Most Faithful Majesty's ship *Rainha de Portugal*, is ready to put to sea at a moment's warning, and in case of emergency he is to follow the directions of the British Minister."

"It is a satisfaction that we have a retreat, for it needs no great penetration to foresee the dangers if the Emperor does not move in time." Sir William looked old and anxious as he made the remark. "And, so far as one can judge, *that* is problematical."

"I agree. It is not a matter of choice, but necessity, which forces the King of Naples to march out of his country before the French collect a sufficient force to drive him, in a week, from his Kingdom."

The Admiral stayed but an hour; Emma contrived to see him off without Sir William. In the portico they waited for the phaeton to emerge from the stable yard. "Will you come again before you sail?" she wistfully inquired. Standing on a lower step, she looked up at him.

"I fear there will not be time—much must be done in three days. I go on while I can, sustained by the thought that I am doing good. My health has declined very much lately; and I know the probability is that I shall never take my seat in the House of Peers."

"Don't, please don't say that. Indeed I could not bear it if what you say is true." Emma's lovely eyes, swimming in tears, looked into his.

"Lady Hamilton—never mind! If I succeed in restoring peace to Europe I shall care not if I am carried to the bourne from which none return."

Emma wept openly; grief distorted the outlines of the phaeton and bay stallion drawing up with a clatter at the bottom of the steps. She felt Lord Nelson take her hand and press it to his lips.

"My situation in this country has *one* rose, but it has been plucked from a bed of thorns." Before she realized it he was driving from the courtyard.

The squadron, consisting of six British and three Portuguese war-ships filled with troops, left Naples Bay for Leghorn on the 22nd of November; on the 23rd the Neapolitan army marched in seven columns into the Papal State. Six days later King Ferdinando, placing himself at their head, took quiet possession of Rome. The joyful intelligence was immediately conveyed by a special messenger to the Queen waiting anxiously at Naples. Emma and Sir William were called to the palace to rejoice at the glad tidings.

"His Majesty was received with acclamations of joy by every class in the Holy City," Carolina reported. "Messieurs, the Republicans yielded to our summons; a few shots have been fired, but the French Generals Championnet and Macdonald were only too glad to retreat before our army. They gave their oaths to General Mack that if permitted unmolested to retire they would evacuate Rome and the Pope's State and not enter Tuscany, but already, according to custom, they have broken their word by leaving a garrison in Castel Sant' Angelo."

Emma joyfully embraced the Queen. "We always said if a bold stand was made the enemy would run like the poor creatures they are. Of all the Monarchs in Italy, the King of Naples is the only one to

show his mettle. How proud you must feel! How delighted we are that our friend, our royal ally, has proved himself a hero! "

Emma's enthusiasm caused Her Majesty to shed some happy tears. "I am rejoiced," she said, "that our action will also be the means of liberating those who are victims of French oppression. Already my husband has written to the Pope inviting His Holiness to return from exile. I have a copy here, and with pleasure read it to you and the Chevalier. His Majesty says:

'Leave then your too modest abode in the Carthusian monastery, and, like Our Lady of Loretto borne on the wings of the cherubim, descend into the Vatican and purify it with your holy presence. All is prepared for your reception; and your Holiness may celebrate Divine service on the day of our Saviour's birth.'

"Such a message at the moment of victory does credit to His Majesty's heart," Sir William observed. "But I must confess to a slight misgiving over the presence of a French garrison in St. Angelo."

"Oh, that is nothing!" Carolina airily returned. "Mack is preparing to besiege the castle. The frightfully bad weather and execrable roads cause me the chief anxiety. I fear there will be much sickness; but, thank God, the King continues well, and I receive good accounts of the Chevalier de Saxe, who came back to this country with General Mack and commands one of our columns."

Sir William's time was still occupied with the treaty of alliance between King George III and King Ferdinando IV: the Marchese di Gallo obstinately stood out for a subsidy to be embodied in a secret article. His persistence finally wore down the ageing Minister's resistance.

"It was very unwillingly that I signed it," Sir William told Emma, "but I made the clause conditional on the Emperor's abandoning the King of Naples. This I felt entitled to do as in Lord Grenville's last dispatch he said His Majesty was not insensible of the danger which must attend His Sicilian Majesty if, 'without support from the Court of Vienna', he entered into open war with the Republic."

Despite King Ferdinando's action against the French forces, Monsieur La Combe de St. Michel continued to represent his Government at the Court of Naples, and the Arms of the French and Cisalpine Republics remained over the doors of the respective legations. But no cockades were seen in the streets and suspected Jacobins looked out of humour.

The next account from the theatre of war was distinguished by optimistic supposition. His Majesty wrote from his headquarters in the Farnesina. . . . The tricolour flag still flew on Castel Sant' Angelo, but the garrison were expected to surrender soon. . . . The Romans acclaimed him, Ferdinando, as their Deliverer, and were said to be arming against the French. . . .

In the wine-shops of Porto Piccolo, among the fishermen of Santa Lucia and in secret clubs up dark staircases, very different intelligence circulated. Deserters from the army told of heavy burdens carried through mud and rain until men fell exhausted, of cold nights without food or shelter; they spoke of baggage, cannon, standards and horses lost or abandoned.

The Queen, trying to reconcile letters from Rome with stories reported by her secret agents, wept and twisted a handkerchief between agitated fingers. "Great God! one cannot tell what misfortune is coming, but, as ever, the good will be the victims. I am told that the column commanded by General Micheroux fell into a French ambushade near Fermo; the troops behaved very ill, losing all the baggage and cannon; some ran back as far as Pescara and Chieti. All this is between ourselves; being shameful to us, it will kill me with grief!"

"Your Majesty should not credit every idle rumour," Sir William advised.

Maria Carolina was in a fever of impatience for Lord Nelson's return; if his ship was an available refuge, calamity could be faced with some equanimity. The *Vanguard* entered the bay on the 5th of December and anchored in deep water S.S.E. of the lighthouse; soon afterwards the Admiral landed and drove up to Palazzo Sessa.

Sir William was engaged with the Foreign Minister, thus Emma had the pleasure of welcoming the hero.

"Oh, how glad I am to see you safe back! I was so afraid you'd go ashore at Leghorn; indeed, I was afraid of countless misfortunes that might overtake you, for I don't trust the Tuscans more than the French."

"God bless you for comforting me with your letters," he answered, holding her hand and looking into her face. "You still look pale. How distressed I was to hear you were ill!"

"'Twas but a chill; the weather has been so bad—nothing but rain and high winds. How unhappy we were on your account, knowing you would be sick so tossed about! For two nights I did not sleep

thinking of your sufferings. And I remembered your words at parting—that you did not expect to live to take your seat in the House of Peers.”

“I am still much unhinged, but no consideration of health shall make me relinquish my duty, even though it kills me.”

To Emma’s chagrin Sir William’s approaching footsteps sounded in the corridor. With hands outstretched he entered the room. “My dear Nelson, I rejoice to see you! Emma will have told ye I was detained by the Marchese di Gallo, recounting the latest intelligence. You have providentially arrived at a critical moment, for it appears that King Ferdinando’s fine army, from treachery and cowardice, is dwindling away. In a recent attack at Civita Castellana, three posts north of Rome, the behaviour of the Neapolitans, particularly the officers, has been very pusillanimous, so much so that General Mack has degraded some and placed sergeants in their stead. By this means he hopes he will yet be able to rally the troops and give a good account of the French force, which is said to be no more than seven thousand at Castellana.”

“I question the numbers,” Lord Nelson answered, “but that is no matter, because were they but half seven thousand I doubt if the whole Neapolitan army would be a match for them. One thing stands out as clear as daylight—if Mack is defeated, this country is lost.”

The necessity of frequent consultation with Sir William in the critical and swiftly changing circumstances induced Lord Nelson to abandon his intention of conducting all business from the *Vanguard*. To Emma’s delight he agreed to reoccupy his old bedchamber, and his desk was again set up in the mirror-room.

His surprise that Monsieur La Combe de St. Michel still acted as Minister to Naples was quickly translated into speech. Neither the Queen nor the Marchese di Gallo were able to defend themselves, and meekly listened to his outspoken opinion. On the 8th of December the Arms of the Republic were taken down and the French Minister and his suite put on board a pink for Genoa.

“It is all of a piece with the way this Government conducts war, and recalls my recent experience at Leghorn, when the Neapolitan General in command refused to seize French privateers lying at the mole under the pretence that the King of Naples *was not at war with the French!*”

Sir William chuckled. “I’ll wager that you and General Naselli did not see eye to eye in the conduct of hostilities!”

"I told you what to expect!" said Emma.

The Queen's distress mounted as misfortunes multiplied; news that the Count de Saxe had been severely wounded while endeavouring to rally his men came as a crowning blow.

"Pity me—pity my virtuous, sacrificed husband," she sobbed incoherently against Emma's sympathetic shoulder. "God alone knew what evils are in reserve—Mack is in despair, and there is reason to be so. We shrink at nothing if the villains come: enormous expenditure, life—everything. But if the people are cowardly, we are lost! The stay of the brave Admiral is my sole comfort, as in case of calamity I can confide my children to him. Miledi, all this afflicts and kills me!"

On the 13th of December it became known that the enemy had advanced into Abruzzo Ultra and were in possession of Aquila. Sir William communicated the unwelcome intelligence when he sat down to dinner. "I understand Mack has retreated to Velletri, twenty-six miles south of Rome; but the situation of the King and Acton is still obscure."

"That, if I mistake not, will be revealed during the next twenty-four hours," Nelson dryly observed; "in the meantime it will be my duty to prepare for the embarkation which must now be imminent."

"If only Troubridge was here!" Emma repined; "for I don't count the whole Portuguese squadron as valuable as one British Ship of the Line."

"I shall recall the *Culloden* and *Goliath*, and hope they will get here in time."

After dinner Lord Nelson repaired on board his flagship, where he remained until the following day. At dawn on the 14th King Ferdinando, disguised as a footman to the Duca d'Ascoli, unobtrusively returned to his capital. He entered his palace stealthily, yet within an hour his arrival was known throughout Naples. *Lazzaroni* posted to the *largo*, lustily shouting for "*Nasone*". Jacobins also came into the open wearing red caps and tricolour cockades. Several clashes occurred between the rival factions, victory generally going to the King's supporters, who were sturdier than the aristocrats in the French clique. During the morning Sir William was notified by Lord Nelson that three English transports were available to receive the effects of British merchants and that the whole squadron was ready to receive their persons. "Nelson recommends that everything sent on board should be dispatched with as little bustle and as much secrecy as possible," Sir William added as he folded the letter. "I think, Em,

I had better seize the opportunity, before things grow worse, to embark the cases that could not be accommodated in the *Colossus*. Though containing inferior vases, the worst are too valuable to be left as plunder for the French invaders."

"You'd best take care of them, Sir Will'um, for those boxes hold the most valuable part of your collection!"

"Nonsense, Emma! I wish ye wouldn't keep harping on that idea—I know what I'm about!"

"So do I, Sir Will'um!"

Emma spent the afternoon in a window overlooking the bay. She saw the Portuguese 74 *São Affonso* bring in two prizes, and later watched the *Principe Reale*, flying the Marquis de Nisa's flag, arrive in company with the British frigate *Alcmene*. Presently her attention was deflected from the harbour by pandemonium in the courtyard below. A number of injured *lazzaroni* were being brought by partisans to have their wounds washed in Sir William's fountain. While the casualties received attention a body of wild, strong young brigands marched up and down brandishing clubs and daggers: ten of the company entered the portico and stationed themselves as sentries. This proceeding did not pass unchallenged. Henry Smith came out and interrogated the leader; he returned indoors and was succeeded by Sir William.

Determined to know what was going forward, Emma hastened from the room and down the stairs, only to collide with Sir William re-entering the house. "Well, my dear, we are accorded a signal honour—a guard, no less, of *lazzaroni*, who will stand day and night at our portal and attend me wheresoever I go!"

"They must have gone crazy!"

"It appears the order comes from the chief of the cut-throats, Egidio Palli, and is a mark of favour. At the same time it is designed to prevent any action on my part, or on Lord Nelson's, to remove *Il Re Lazzaroni* from his devoted subjects. They suspect, it seems, that he will desert them, and as they desire nothing better than to fight for their King, are determined to keep him in their midst."

"My God, what will become of the Queen if she is cut off from us and all hope of rescue? 'Twill be the tragedy of the French royal family over again!"

"I confidently expect that the resource and determination of our gallant Nelson will prevent a repetition of Marie Antoinette's cruel fate."

"Oh, I wish he would come! Do you think any accident can have happened?"

"No, my love; the arrangements he must make for every contingency cannot be accomplished in a moment."

Animated by excitement and suspense, Emma returned to the upstairs window and pressed her forehead against the glass, straining her eyes to see through the dimming light. A boat from the *Alcmene* had passed under the stern of the Portuguese flagship and was crossing a strip of choppy grey water to the *Vanguard*. Three cloaked figures ascended the companion ladder; as the foremost stepped on board a salute was fired. Over the poop, a couple of lighted lanterns swung like flitting fire-flies; a red lamp appeared at the masthead of the *Principe Reale*: flames, smoke and a shower of stones shot with a loud detonation from Vesuvius. When it became impossible to descry anything save the three lights above the allied flagships, Emma reluctantly left her post and wandered aimlessly along dim corridors and through shuttered reception-rooms. Her candle showed empty spaces on the walls and pictures stacked in corners. Recognizing the frame of Romney's *Bacchante*, she turned it round and gazed at the beautiful face smiling alluringly from the canvas. Wearing leaves in her hair and a loose gown that fell from her shoulder, the gay, wanton figure raced forward, leading a goat by its horns. Emma looked at her picture with wistful admiration. . . . Sure, 'twas a bewitching face. . . . How cruel that time is jealous! . . .

Sir William's voice made her jump. "All these must be packed to-morrow," he remarked; "but I apprehend some difficulty in getting them on board a transport. The *lazzaroni* posted in the courtyard will see to that! Thank God I took the opportunity of dispatching my vases just before the ruffians arrived—after dinner Chesa sent up two casks of *paxoretti*, so I had the cases taken back in the waggon to his storehouse."

"That was clever, Sir Will'um!"

"I'm a wily old bird!" His answer was a complacent accompaniment to the slow enjoyment of rappee.

Emma waited until past eleven o'clock before going to bed: Lord Nelson's *calesso* entered the courtyard while she was putting on her night-sack. She heard him come upstairs with Sir William and pass on to the mirror-room; two minutes later she joined them.

"I'm all undone for bed," she cried, "so you must please excuse my

déshabille. I couldn't wait to dress myself properly, so impatient was I to see you! "

A blue dressing-gown of soft silk clung to Emma's voluptuous form; her tawny unbound hair fell in ringlets over her shoulders to her waist; around her floated the seductive fragrance of bergamot. With an effort the Admiral averted his glance, as he declared in a voice of elaborate unconcern: "Lady Hamilton, as a man I do not know the difference in a lady's dress. I only know that everything becomes you to perfection."

Sir William fidgeted irritably. "Lord Nelson, I am all impatience—won't ye continue your narrative? "

"Ah—yes—as I was saying—I should have been here in the early evening but for the arrival of Kelim Effendi with the Grand Signior's gifts. The necessity of paying him civilities made it impossible to consult you before my second interview with Acton. However, between our morning and evening meetings the General had evolved some concrete plans founded on the rapidly changing situation. What I have long suspected is established: the Neapolitan marine, like the army, is full of traitors. So corrupt is it supposed to be that the officers and men cannot be trusted to fit some of the ships for sea, and I was desired by His Majesty to request the Marquis de Niza to lend sufficient Portuguese officers and men for this service! "

"If Their Majesties cannot trust their own ships it takes no penetration to foresee the difficulties of a forced flight to Sicily. Have ye noticed the disquieting behaviour of the mob, whose loyalty to the King threatens to be as dangerous as the perfidy of the nobility and the fighting forces? "

"Did our guard of ragamuffins accost you? " Emma interjected, "and is the palace watched in the same way? "

"The men at your door bade me good night, and the *lazzaroni* swarming around Palazzo Reale appeared quite friendly, but all are armed with knives, and more than one suspected Jacobin has felt cold steel. The royal family are little better than prisoners, and it may be necessary to take strong measures before we get them out."

"And how is this to be accomplished? " Sir William inquired. "An escape cannot be effected without collaboration between liberators and captives, and that is exactly what the mob design to prevent. If you or I or any of your officers are seen going in and out of the palace, Their Majesties' intention to abandon Naples will immediately be suspected. Then God knows what might happen! "

"I agree. It would be highly imprudent for either of us to go to Court, as we know that all our movements are watched—I hear there is even an idea by the Jacobins of arresting our persons as hostages against the attack of Naples, should the French get possession of it. The safety of Their Sicilian Majesties depends upon the courage, address and status of the intermediary who conducts this important business!"

"Ay—the status! that is the *sine qua non*. To succeed, the envoy should be trusted by the *lazzaroni* as well as by the royal family. The only person able to claim that distinction is Emmal!"

"Lady Hamilton can claim a greater distinction—courage. All our lives may depend upon the daring manner in which the enterprise is conducted." Lord Nelson's passionate, sensitive face wore an expression half brooding, half exultant. He stared earnestly at Emma, watching the colour rising in her cheeks, ardour sparkling in her eyes. "My Lady, will you be the instrument to save this distressed royal family from a similar fate to that suffered by the Sovereigns of France?"

"Yes! A thousand times yes! You offer me glory, and ask if I will take it! How can I thank you? I will put my heart and soul into the enterprise, and, believe me, you will not have cause to regret the trust you impose in me!"

"My dear!" Sir William dryly expostulated. "Refrain, I beg, from rhapsody until you have achieved your purpose. Even then a more modest tone would not be out of place!"

Emma made a wry face. "Sir Will'um! Sir Will'um! Why must you curb my tongue, when you well know it is my way to talk extravagant? Would I please you better if I acted false to myself?"

It was arranged, before they separated for the night, that Emma should pay an early visit to the palace and return as quickly as possible to receive the Turkish representative at noon. Knowing that the Admiral's breakfast hour was five o'clock, Emma lay awake through the short night for fear of over-sleeping. She arrived as Tom Allen poured out his master's coffee.

"Lady Hamilton, what a surprise and a pleasure!" Lord Nelson exclaimed, springing to his feet. "At this early hour I had not hoped for anything so delightful. But what can I offer you? Signora Madre knows my simple tastes and gives me only bread, honey and figs."

"No butter?" Emma demanded in mock vexation. "I declare I shall accuse you of high treason. Don't you know that His Majesty

is our butter-man? All those who want it pure must send to Court, whence 'tis sold impressed with the royal arms!"

"They do curious things in Naples—I have discovered that the King is also the only dealer in gunpowder, salt and tobacco! It is strange that the Crown, mercenary in small matters, contentedly loses large sums by the farming of taxes. Much is raised, but very little reaches the national chest: all are plundering who can get at public money or stores."

"It has always been so: every Jack-in-office looks on it as a right to feather his nest, and each sees to it that he is rewarded for thieving. No wonder the country has got to the pass it has. Maria Carolina sees all and rages, but what can she do? As a young Queen she tried to reform the Government, thereby making enemies who have schemed for her downfall ever since."

"I feel for her as a great Queen. Who would not? Thank God my health is better, my mind never firmer, and my heart in the right trim to comfort, relieve and protect those whom it is my duty to assist. Lady Hamilton, together we will save this royal family; what is more, we will put them securely back on the throne of Naples."

Solemnly, in brimming cups of coffee, Emma and Nelson drank to the success of a joint ambition.

During her walk to the palace Emma met several deserters from the army limping through the street. In three weeks fine uniforms had degenerated into stained rags, and stout infantrymen had shrunk to skin and bone. On reaching the palace she was ushered into the Queen's breakfast-room, where His Majesty compensated himself with a brace of woodcock for the recent privations of campaigning. He wore a gown so richly embroidered that the purple silk background was hardly discernible; down the front a trickle of gravy dimmed the bright hues of a pomegranate. As he discarded picked bones, the Queen collected them from the cloth and replenished his plate. Both monarchs greeted Emma with pleasure. Ferdinando winked ponderously and nibbled a merry-thought, Carolina rushed into querulous speech. "Observe, Miledi, how the infamous behaviour of our army has reduced our upright King! Imagine, he had himself to strip Prince di Taranto and the Duc di Trani of their uniforms and disgrace them!"

"They were the only ones I could get at—the others ran too fast," Ferdinando placidly remarked, mopping up gravy with his bread. "If I could have reached General San Filippo I'd have torn every

stitch off him; but instead he chose to make himself *un sans-culotte*." He stopped to giggle at his own joke. "Near Fermi San Filippo said to his men, 'I no longer command you,' and was going off to the enemy. A sergeant retorted, 'You are a traitor! You have been talking to the French!' San Filippo again replied, 'I no longer command you.' 'Then you are an enemy,' quoth our sergeant, and shot him through the right arm. However, the French advanced, and San Filippo was among them; thereupon our General Micheroux ran away, as did all the infantry, and had it not been for the good conduct of two regiments of cavalry there might have been a panic. As it was we lost cannon, tents, baggage and the military chest."

"*Mon Dieu!* What infamy!" cried Carolina. "The suddenness of the blow has distracted me; I do not think I shall ever recover from it, but will sink me amazed into the grave, placing myself in the hands of divine Providence."

"Lord Nelson has sent me to advise Your Majesties that in the event of your having to escape suddenly, the *Vanguard* is ready to receive you and your property," Emma responded in reassuring tones. "All must be done secretly, or suspicions will be aroused. Each night after darkness falls I shall be waiting in the room overlooking Vico Santa Maria to receive your valuables and money; thence they will be taken to the flagship by British seamen. Who will be so bold as to challenge *them*? But, to make our plans doubly secure, Lord Nelson and Sir Will'um have made me their emissary, for 'tis certain your lives might be jeopardized if an inkling got abroad that you meant to fly."

"I don't!" Ferdinando declared as he noisily crunched a small bone. "If the enemy advance, my *lazzaroni* will keep them out of the city—it has been proved that none of my other subjects can stand up to a Frenchman. As to moving our Court to Palermo, how much safer should we be there? Have you forgotten that only four years ago Palermo was the centre of a Jacobin conspiracy when our Viceroy died in strange circumstances?"

"The *giunta* proved that the rising was the work of avowed *Banditti*," Carolina reminded. "God knows how Prince Caramanico met his death!"

"The Almighty doubtless knows, and so may you, my Austrian hen! All I know is that I'm not going to quit Naples and my *lazzaroni* who will fight for me!" With this remark His Majesty rose from his chair, and, turning to his waiting equerries, laid his hand on his

belly. "*Sono ben pransato*," he said, "*adesso bisogna un buona panchiata*."

The Queen and Emma were alone. "I pay no attention to the King's bravado," Carolina announced; "he is not a man to take unnecessary risks, and when he finds how unreliable is the Italian temperament he will be only too glad to leave the Neapolitans to see after themselves. In every letter General Mack is more pressing that we should put ourselves into safety, and without loss of time, as the enemy is advancing and the troops he commands continue in their treacherous and cowardly conduct, making little or no resistance, so that on them we can place no kind of dependence. I shall prepare to leave, and will send you everything—jewels, money and necessities—to be consigned to our liberator, Lord Nelson."

"He and I will take care of them," Emma fervently promised, "indeed there is nothing to fear with the Hero of the Nile and the British Navy behind you!"



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE situation at Naples deteriorated from hour to hour. Cold winds, grey skies and intermittent rain failed to clear the streets. As yet the mob lacked leadership or settled purpose: excesses were due to an exuberant sense of collective power rather than to real enmity for the French, who were the quarry. Armed with sticks, knives and stones, marauding bands hastened with volatile energy upon enterprises forgotten before they were executed. Soldiers straggling back to the capital were met at the city gates and relieved of muskets and ammunition; thus strengthened, the rabble roved with greater confidence, committing murders reported by agents of the now impotent *giunta*.

On the morning of the 17th it was recognized that a retreat to the island of Sicily was inevitable. At dawn all the seamen and several officers from the *Parthenope* and *Sannite* abandoned their ships in the bay and went on shore. On being informed, Lord Nelson hastened down to the mole; soon afterwards the *Vanguard* was seen to shift her berth out of gun-shot of the forts. As the day advanced, activity increased in the harbour. Working-parties on board three transport victuallers anchored in the *Cratere* threw overboard condemned provisions, hoops and staves, to make room for valuables and effects of British merchants. In Porto Grande English and Portuguese seamen laboured to move three Sail of the Line and three frigates to safe anchorage outside the Portuguese squadron. Having been stripped of spars to supply British men-of-war damaged in battle, the Neapolitan ships were little better than hulks, and impossible to navigate.

Taking turns with Emma at the telescope, Sir William deplored what he saw. "How unfortunate that Lord St. Vincent's action in stopping at Gibraltar all masts and yards destined for this country has necessitated the dismantling of these useful ships! Lord Nelson sees no chance of fitting the *Guiscardo*, *San Joachim* and *Tancredi* for

sea, and all may have to be burnt to prevent their falling into the hands of the French."

"Think of the money that went to build them—wasted! Lord Nelson told me that it costs, with the thieving way things are done here, more to build one Neapolitan Ship of the Line than it takes to fit out ten English ships. He says five Sail of the Line must ruin the country."

"The building and upkeep of this marine have already made that *un fait accompli*. To maintain the pretensions of a military power everything has been sacrificed. To what purpose? The Italian is not a man of valour, and never will be. Put him in a fine uniform, and he struts about loudly proclaiming himself a hero; confront him with a resolute opponent, and he is the fleetest runner in Europe."

English and foreign visitors became much alarmed by movements in the harbour, and rushed to the British Legation anxious to know if the withdrawal of the *Vanguard* from the roadstead indicated that Lord Nelson was leaving Naples to its fate. During the afternoon visitors included the Demoiselles of France and Cardinal York. The claimant to the British Crown wore his scarlet robes as Bishop of Frascati; Princess Adélaïde and Princess Victoire were muffled in ermine and their dresses were embroidered with fleurs-de-lys. The trio of royal refugees met in Sir William's cabinet, each equally anxious to know how best to escape from the French.

"My problem is this," the Cardinal stated in a cultured, weary voice: "to leave this night in a *polacca* that is sailing for Messina, or to remain and face the probability of another ignominious flight before the conquering atheists."

"And our problem is *how* can we fly? and where?" Madame Victoire's wistful blue eyes looked appealingly at Britain's Envoy. "My sister and I are not so nimble as in youth, and we are already so near the foot of Italy that Messieurs the Republicans would soon drive us into the sea. Therefore we think it better to take to that element at once, and we come to ask, as a special favour, the privilege of embarking in Lord Nelson's beautiful ship."

"We are both good sailors!" Madame Adélaïde eagerly supplemented, "and I'm sure we could promise not to be a trouble or an expense—we have a little money remaining, sufficient to buy food for two old women."

In the faded, china-blue eyes and wrinkled pink-and-white faces remained the dependence and faith of childhood. Sir William felt acutely embarrassed.

"Should flight become imperative, Lord Nelson will not leave any of us without means of escape, but as guests of the Court Your Royal Highnesses must make your plans with the aid of the Queen."

"We'd rather depend on you," they said in chorus. "We couldn't bear to face anything again like the Old Palace at Caserta."

With great determination Sir William rose and planted farewell kisses on the frail old hands. "All I can do shall be done, but etiquette must be preserved, or we shall ourselves be revolutionaries."

After the Demoiselles had gone, Cardinal York looked quizzically at King George's Envoy. "I suppose ye will tell me, as ye told the old Princesses, that I must not look to England for help?"

"On the contrary," Sir William suavely responded. "Arrangements are already made to accommodate in Portuguese warships any of the Cardinals, should it become necessary to leave Naples."

The last Royal Stuart bowed urbanely. "I thank you. May I also inquire if safe convoy is to be provided for the French and Corsican *émigrés* who rely on the protection of the monarch ruling Britain?"

"I have myself freighted two Greek *polaccas* for this purpose," Sir William retorted with some heat.

Long after sunset callers still waited in the Minister's ante-chamber, but Sir William had escaped and was crossing the bay with Emma to the Marquis de Niza's *palazzo* on Strada Nuova. The Portuguese Admiral was giving a splendid fête to honour Lord Nelson and Kelim Effendi, and for the presentation of the *Chelengk*. His house was approached from the sea by a double flight of steps and a private quay illuminated for the fête by blazing cressets. Plumes of flame, magnified in the glassy black water, floated in shuddering golden streamers to break against the dark hull of the *Vanguard*, a shadow looming on darkness. Into the dazzling glare came boats and barges, high-prowed Maltese *dghausas*, and cutters from men-of-war. Faces, painted and powdered, peered out of curtained canopies; *cavalieri serventi*, cautiously balancing on swaying gunwales, prepared to leap ashore.

Emma and Sir William landed just after Captain Hope of the *Alcmene*, who waited to greet them. "Well, here we are again!" the sea officer cheerfully proclaimed. "And 'tis something to my credit, for since morning I've done my share of pulling the Neapolitan Navy out of the mole. To move three 74's, not to mention three frigates, is enough to tax even British seamen."

"The appalling state of affairs in this Kingdom is putting the

utmost strain on everyone," Sir William replied with unusual petulance. Leaving Emma and her cavalier to follow as they pleased, the Minister hastened after General Acton, who was mounting to the portico.

"I hope Sir William doesn't consider me too junior a Captain to be at this party—but, after all, 'twas I who brought Mahomet Kelim and his suite from Egypt."

"Don't heed Sir Will'um—he's provoked at the near prospect of leaving his house and treasures to the cursed French. As to yourself, none has a greater right to be here. Indeed, the old Turk ought to give you a diamond feather for your hat, seeing you were the means of salving Buonaparte's dispatches, thrown into the water by the French officer taking home the news of Nelson's victory. How glad I was to learn that the City of London is rewarding the two brave seamen who jumped overboard!"

"Aye, a pension of twenty pounds a year each is pretty handsome! London always acts generously to the seamen who preserve the City's trade. The sword, value two hundred guineas, that the Mayor and Aldermen voted to our distinguished hero will be something out of the way and be a fitting companion to the splendid gifts from the Sublime Port."

"Have you seen 'The Plume of Triumph' and the sable *pellicia*?" Emma eagerly demanded. "Is the *Chelengk* gorgeous?"

"Magnificent! 'Tis a plume of thirteen diamond fingers which represent the thirteen ships taken and destroyed at the Nile. Never before has such a present been made to any but a victorious Mussulman. The principal diamond and four surrounding ones together are worth five thousand pounds, and the whole central star can be put in motion by watchwork at the back."

"Well, I never!" said Emma in awed tones.

Lord Nelson had arrived and was encircled by a crowd of Neapolitan noblewomen, each competing with her neighbour to enslave the famous Admiral. When Emma appeared he broke away without ceremony.

"I can imagine that the kind attentions of these ladies might put my heart in a flutter were it not fixed to a wife whose character must ever command love and respect."

Emma did not respond; instead she gazed at the company. Men were powdered and dressed as for Court, but women wore the

fashions of France, which were so transparent that no lover could feel teased by charms concealed. With the flimsy, clinging gowns went turban head-dresses of gauze elaborately twisted through the hair to sustain a single feather of prodigious height. Beauties so generously displayed seemed both to delight and horrify Kelim Effendi and his suite.

Moodily Emma put her thoughts into words. "In all that company before you there is hardly a woman who is virtuous, nor a man who does not deserve the gallows."

"So far as I am concerned, they could all be sunk with pleasure," Lord Nelson replied.

The Marquis de Niza knew the kind of entertainment preferred by Neapolitans of the first rank, and he gave them what they liked—facilities to play cards for high stakes and a sumptuous supper. Lest these diversions might not equally appeal to the Ottoman delegation, La Pitro and Duguenay danced the Tarantella. As a faun and a Bacchante the two performers threw themselves ardently into the spirit of the dance, and their screams, attitudes, starts and embraces appeared to awaken responsive vibrations in the senses of beholders.

The Marquis de Niza beamed upon his guests. "I have provided what all enjoy," he confided to Emma and Lord Nelson, "*le mélange de pudeur et de volupté*."

The Portuguese Rear-Admiral was short, rotund, good-tempered and merry. His preference was for the amenities of a port, but regard for Britain's hero made him willingly submit to hardships afloat. Several orders brightened his uniform, and many fine diamond and emerald rings glittered on his fingers. As the event of the evening drew near he took Emma aside to present her with Britannia's trident and shield—gilded papier-mâché accoutrements for a symbolic figure. Equipped for her rôle, Emma mounted to a stage draped with the flags of Great Britain, Portugal and Naples, and was enthusiastically greeted by officers of the *Vanguard* and *Alcmene*. The orchestra struck up, her voice rang out triumphantly:

"When Britain first, at Heav'n's command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter, the charter of the land
And guardian angels sung this strain:
Rule, Britannia! Britannia rules the waves!
Britains never, never, never shall be slaves! . . ."

After the first chorus all the English guests sprang to their feet the better to express their feelings; six verses proving insufficient for the purpose, they went back to the beginning, regardless of sour looks from dissentient Neapolitans. At the conclusion Emma sat down in the attitude of Britannia as depicted on an English penny.

While huzzas of British sea officers continued to ring in her ears she watched Lord Nelson, looking feverish, shy and defiant, penned in by the Turkish Envoy and his suite sitting cross-legged on a circle of cushions. When all were settled, Kelim Effendi nimbly uprose, flourishingly unfurled a scroll, and began to read in a pacific, oily voice. Monsieur Pisanti, interpreter to the delegation, simultaneously recited a translation. As both men spoke on one note but in different keys, it was easy to follow either version.

"It has been made known to the powerful, formidable, and most magnificent Grand Signior that an English Squadron in the White Sea has actually destroyed the best ships the French had in their possession in an action off Alexandria in Egypt, a joyful event laying the Sublime Porte under an obligation. The service rendered on this occasion by our much esteemed friend, Admiral Lord Nelson, being of a nature calling for public acknowledgment, the Grand Signior has destined as a present in his Imperial name to the said Admiral Lord Nelson, a diamond aigrette and a sable fur with broad sleeves.

WEAR THEM WITH JOY AND HONOUR!"

Accepting the *Chelengk* from an attendant, Kelim Effendi set the central jewel in motion and attached the plume to the front of Lord Nelson's hat. He then enveloped the short, slender figure in a scarlet cloth robe lined with sable. The wide, fur-trimmed sleeves hung nearly to the floor—so long were they that Kelim Effendi had to feel inside the cuff before he could press into the hero's left hand the third gift—a box set with diamonds presented by the Dowager Sultana.

Emma shouted "Hip, hip, huzzal" as loudly as any of the sea officers, stifling as she did so treasonable disappointment at the size of the diamonds. Gazing at the memorable scene, she determined to engrave it on her memory. The Turks were swarthy and squab, with tiny feet encased in coloured-leather turned-up slippers. . . . Kelim Effendi's hips curved like a woman's beneath the soft folds of voluminous trousers. . . . His heavy eyelids drooped superciliously; a

luxuriant black beard did not conceal his small, scarlet mouth. . . . Beside him Nelson looked fragile and battered, too small to sustain the weight of so much cloth and fur. . . .

In firm nasal tones the Hero of the Nile began his speech of thanks.

"Words are entirely inadequate to my feelings for the exalted mark of approbation bestowed on me by the Imperial Grand Signior, which I must ever attribute to his goodness, not to my deserts. I shall always pray to God of the Heaven and Earth to pour down his choicest blessings on the Imperial head, to bless his Arms with success against all his enemies, to grant health and long life to the Grand Signior, and for ever to continue me his grateful and devoted servant."

"Bravo!" said Sir William in a loud, encouraging voice. "Hip, hip, hurra!" shouted the sea officers. Emma clapped; tears pricked her eyelids. Lest they fell, she fixed her gaze on the centre of the *Chelengk*, twirling round and round . . . twinkling like a star. . . .

Emma's promise, always to be ready at midnight to receive valuables smuggled from the palace, compelled her to leave the party as the guests were trooping into supper. Declaring illness to be the cause of her departure, she staggered forth, supported by Lord Nelson and Sir William. While waiting for the barge to come to the steps they conferred in undertones. "We cannot, I think, with safety delay the removal of the royal family beyond Friday night," said Lord Nelson, "and it becomes a question how many valuables can be removed in that time. What has the Queen sent, so far?"

"Clothes mostly, and some trinkets belonging to the Princesses," Emma replied; "but this night I am to expect sixty thousand ducats in gold and to-morrow all the diamonds!"

"Would to God I could be ashore to conduct the business. Not that I flatter myself I should show so much address, but my anxiety for the safety of two dear friends would be lessened. However, I am tied to the *Vanguard* until some order is established in the Neapolitan ships; the *Sannite* alone can be got ready for sea, though Caracciolo says he cannot muster a full crew that can be trusted."

Sir William made a despairing noise with his tongue. "Both the King and Acton declared to me that the *Sannite* was the one completely loyal ship in the marine."

The barge drew alongside. Flames from the cressets flickered on upturned dark faces of oarsmen enigmatically watching the for-

eigners for whom they toiled. Sir William stood aside to allow Lord Nelson to escort Emma down the steps. As she stepped into the boat she paused with her hand resting in the Admiral's to say earnestly: "Be on your guard with the Marchesa de Santo Marco, she is a deceitful schemer!"

Sir William overheard and intervened. "I warn ye that Emma's suspicions are founded on nothing more than dislike!"

"A woman doesn't need to have things wrote down in black and white, Sir Will'um."

Long after the barge was absorbed into the darkness, Lord Nelson stood illumined by the flaming cressets, a lonely, wistful figure crowned with a Plume of Triumph.

Between the nights of the 14th and 20th Emma received through the postern into Vico Santa Maria royal treasure amounting to two and a half million sterling, the crown jewels and other diamonds. Thanks to her ingenuity, the transference had aroused no suspicion among the *lazzaroni* guarding the palace. Death was no stranger in Naples, and at midnight it was a common event to meet *fratanzari*, muffled from head to foot in white linen garments, carrying a corpse on a bier. Eight trusted servants, a rich pall and a sufficiency of lighted tapers proved an effective disguise for royal money-bags.

"The Queen said 'twas sacrilege and would have none of my plan," Emma confessed to Nelson, "but at last she saw there was no other way of getting the treasure to safety."

"Lady Hamilton, you are a nonpareil! You alone could have devised a means of getting past the pickets. 'Twas done just in time, for I noticed as I came from General Acton's that the mob is growing more unruly and very suspicious of His Majesty's intentions."

"Has everything been settled? Is the King inclined to go?"

"The positions seem reversed—the King is now pressing and the Queen holding back. Mack writes that he has no prospect of stopping the French, and entreats Their Majesties to retire from Naples as expeditiously as possible. Aquila is taken and six hundred men: not much honour has been lost by the Neapolitan officers, for God knows they had little to lose, but they lost all they had."

"What scoundrels!" said Emma fervently, and added: "Is it decided which night we escape?"

"Unless the enemy or the weather force a change of plan, Their Majesties leave the palace at eight o'clock on Friday and embark from the arsenal; you and Sir William should leave rather earlier."

"How are the royal family to get from the palace to the arsenal without being seen? They'll be recognized at once!"

"That is the danger. Acton tells me of an underground passage reputed to run from the palace to the Molesiglio. Will you ask the King if he knows anything of it? I've noticed an ancient grille, half under water, which might be a secret outlet."

"If a passage exists, I'll discover it!" Emma cried, "and I hope 'tis long forgotten, for there's nothing I'd like better than to find it for myself."

"I implore you, Lady Hamilton, take no risk! Knowing your daring character, I fear it may lead you into a scrape. Should His Majesty say the cellars are unexplored, send for me!"

Emma made a roguish face. "I'll promise nothing, except to wait till to-morrow morning—to-day will soon be too dark for adventures."

That night, as Sir William thought of bed and Emma prepared for her vigil in the little writing-room, Sir John Acton paid an unexpected visit. The Prime Minister's wooden visage was expressionless as usual while he retailed events of the evening. "The populace, to the number of many hundreds, collected under the windows of the palace two hours ago and became very obstreperous in their demands to see the King. Convinced they would be placated in no other way, His Majesty armed himself with a brace of pistols and appeared upon the balcony. Thereupon the mob revealed their laudable intentions. With one voice they entreated him not to abandon Naples, but to point out the traitors and Jacobins, and his *lazzaroni* would immediately do justice by dispatching them. Finding that their intentions towards himself were entirely amiable, their excellent Sovereign was concerned to calm them, and they went off, assuring His Majesty that he and his family would be perfectly safe under their protection in spite of the ill-behaviour of the army."

"Aye, but for how long?" Sir William queried. "Mob sentiment is proverbially fickle."

"You are right, but if it can be kept stable for forty-eight hours there will be less jeopardy for all of us. From every side we receive accounts of horrors. My brother Joseph arrived yesterday from Tuscany; he recounts tales of the nastiest nature—everywhere the Grand Duke's neutrality is violated, the French invaders make the country their own and help themselves to whatever pleases."

"I never expected that the Grand Duke's supposed neutrality would save him. Will your brother remain here?"

"To-morrow he goes back to Florence—he came only to arrange about my niece."

"Does Mary Anne leave you?" Emma inquired in an innocent voice.

"The choice was left to her, and she chose my protection," Sir John answered complacently. His face remained impassive, but his small, elderly eyes were bright with youthful self-esteem.

"Then we shall have the pleasure of Anne's society in Palermo," Sir William smoothly observed. "I understand that Lady Acton and the children are to be passengers of the Brigadiere Caracciolo in the *Sannite* and that you will be with us in the *Vanguard*?"

"That is the arrangement at present. Both ships threaten to be like nurseries, and there will be nowhere to retreat from the indelicate scenes that must be witnessed where infants are concerned. The royal grandchild, not yet seven weeks old, needs constant nourishment. A sucking child makes a most dreadful spectacle to the eyes of the servant-women and in the rest of the family."

"Lord Nelson is separating the sheep from the goats," Emma saucily assured him. "The sheep and the lambs will be in the Admiral's quarters; the goats below in the ward-room—this will ease your mind, Sir John!"

After the Prime Minister's departure, Emma was rebuked. "I thought you'd become too much of a Court woman to let your feelings master your tongue!"

"I didn't say one half of what I thought! General Acton is a laughing-stock, falling in love with a maid more than fifty years younger than himself—and his niece to boot!"

"Ye were not always so merciless to elderly infatuation. I recall the time when ye assured me that love could bridge the gap of years. Hearts, unhappily, retain youthful elasticity long after the outer hulk is crumbling."

"Sir Will'um, I'm sorry. I didn't think of you and me, which is quite different!"

"Is it, my dear?"

The next morning Emma started for the palace soon after breakfast; it was cold, and the wind made a melancholy accompaniment to the drone of bagpipes. Wearing pointed hats, plush or sheepskin breeches, sandals and short cloaks colourless from exposure, shepherds from Abruzzo and Calabria played their Christmas *pastorale* before the shrines to *La Madonna*. Strada Santa Caterina had become

gay overnight with stalls devoted to *le feste di Natale*. Festoons and garlands of flowers surrounded sugar images of the Holy Child, the ass, the ox and the three kings. Brown-habited nuns from Santa Chiara processed with alms-boxes and the infant Christ in wax; *presepi* were on show for a *grano* a peep; ambulant cooks ladled steaming *capitone* from copper cauldrons. Running footmen, dressed like tumblers before a show, hurled themselves upon the crowd, forcing passages for their masters' carriages, onslaughts that rendered it yet more difficult for Emma to wriggle her way up-hill. On attaining the royal *largo* she felt herself in solitude, despite the numbers of *lazzaroni* who stood watching the palace.

The Queen, her daughter-in-law and the Princesses Amelia Theresa, Marie Amélie and Maria Antoinetta, were congregated in a first-floor apartment at the east end of the palace. Five long windows looked across the *darsena* to the bay; on the right the view was curtailed by the arsenal wall, which ran out to enclose the Molesiglio, the jetty from which the royal party would embark on the following night.

Emma was kissed and embraced by the Queen and her daughters. Maria Carolina fretfully broke into hurried speech. "Miledi, my head is quite gone in this cruel and mortal trial. I am bewildered and lost in this horrible break-up of our accustomed habits. Did you receive the great cases last night? Alas! The things belonging to such a large family will be very numerous, as it is for life!"

"Ma'am, 'twill only be exile for a short time. When the vile French are beat and driven from Italy, Nelson, Sir Will'um and I mean to put you back on the Throne of Naples."

"I despair of such an event. Crime, treason, cowardice and no vigour existing in our army renders hope impossible. Yesterday my son returned from Capua with dreadful accounts of the flying troops and unheard-of misfortunes."

The Hereditary Princess was more specific. "My husband took with him a travelling-bed lined with Russia sable, a wedding gift to me from my brother, but the French advanced so fast that Francis had scarce time to struggle out of it, and 'twas left on the field of battle!"

A smirk of derision rather than of wifely sympathy seemed to twist Princess Clementina's pinched features. But her expression was unobserved; a vibrant hum on the air usurped attention. Instantly recognizing the sound of a mob in action, Emma rushed to a window and stepped upon the balcony.

Pulling on a rope and looking back at an object on the ground, a crowd of *lazzaroni* raced along the quay beside the *darsena*. Savage faces looked towards the palace; yells of triumph greeted the Queen as the cavalcade capered in a circle that ended under the windows. The evolution revealed a man, tied by the leg, jerking through the dirt. His head and torso were enveloped in a closely buttoned travelling-coat that, in his progress, had turned inside out; beyond the muddy hem soiled and bleeding white hands feebly opened and contracted. The victim wore jack-boots, snuff-coloured corduroy breeches and a brown coat and waistcoat—raiment that seemed familiar to Maria Carolina's staring eyes. Opening her mouth in a round O she screamed and screamed and screamed again. A *lazzarone* proudly pulled down the greatcoat into its rightful position and disclosed the gory face of a middle-aged man so deeply slashed with a knife that his teeth showed through his cheek. Yet he lived, and his large black eyes rolled upwards and around as if engaged on an independent search for the persecutors of his body. Despite his changed appearance, Emma recognized the dying man as an emigrant from Corsica, occasionally employed as a courier between the Courts of Naples and Vienna.

"Death to the Jacobins!" shouted the rabble; "as we do to this one, so we serve the others! Down, down with the French! *Viva Ferdinando, il Re lazzaroni! Viva il Papal! Viva la Santa Chiesa!*"

The screams of his wife and daughters and the shouts of his subjects brought the King to the balcony. Raising a huge red fist, His Majesty shook it ferociously. "Murderers, imbeciles, maggots swarming on a dung-heap, how dare you take the law into your hands? I, your King, alone decide who is an enemy. I, Ferdinando of the Two Sicilies, choose who shall live and who shall die! Dispersel! Disband! Seek your Confessors, and in fasts and penitence atone for your mortal sins!"

Scores of grotesque dark faces looked up in sullen bewilderment; a young man, whose half-naked body was thickly covered with matted hair, responded aggressively: "*Nasone*, if you anger us you will lose your head like the King of the French; and so will the Austrian. As to your daughters, we will share them among us, *sceghiete quel che volete!*" Stepping backwards with a swagger, he stumbled against the body of the dying Frenchman. Infuriated, the *lazzarone* stooped and savagely plunged his dagger into the feebly beating heart: a jet of blood sprang into the air. Wiping the blade on his victim's hair,

the murderer sheathed the weapon and walked off. Interest quickly evaporated; a dead Jacobin was no different from a dead dog—both could be kicked, but that was all. . . . Drama was over; Louis Franzolin was left to rest in peace.

Up in the royal apartments the Queen and Princess Christina were in hysterics. Maria Carolina lay on the floor with her head in Emma's lap; her screams were short and sharp as blasts on a whistle; her high-heeled shoes beat a staccato tune on the marble floor. Emma slapped the Queen's face, "*La Santa*" slapped her hands, the King fetched a bowl of water and flung it at his wife.

The shock succeeded where mulder measures had failed. Gulping, Carolina sat up on the floor with her legs extended in the supple attitude of a child, and said collectedly: "The murder of Monsieur Franzolin makes it imperative to find the secret passage, otherwise each of us will be stabbed as we leave the palace. Let us go down to the cellars and see if Lalo and Saverio have discovered anything."

While helping the Queen to rise from her unregal position, Emma said: "Lord Nelson bade me ask if the grille under the Molesiglio is connected with the palace. 'Twould be strange indeed if the Viceroys, who made so many enemies, lacked means of escape."

"There can be no passage, or I should have heard of it," Ferdinando testily asserted. "This palace is less than two hundred years old, but in Castel Nuovo, which was begun in the year of the Sicilian Vespers, there are escapes in every direction."

"I neither look for, nor receive, help or encouragement," said Carolina bitterly. "The King would have us do nothing but trust in God."

From the Queen's dark salon, familiar to many aristocratic spies and secret agents, a cackle stair descended to the cellars. It was so narrow that the royal party had to follow each other like ducks, and so dark that those farthest from the King's lantern must feel their way. Emma came last, behind Princess Amélie, who gained courage from whispered prayers.

On reaching the vaults, Ferdinando took a zigzag course towards sounds of stealthy excavation. His lantern did no more than prick the darkness, throwing a bead of light on flotsam and jetsam of dynasties—shackles worn by Gonzalvo de Cordova's galley-slaves; a rack brought from Spain by Juan de Valdés; mouldering remains of Carnival figures; Vanvitelli's wooden model of Caserta; companies of bloated wine-skins veiled with cobwebs.

A shaft of dank air cut through the mildewed stuffiness; on rounding a pillar the King's lantern shone upon a heap of masonry, a yawning archway and his servants, Lalo and Saverio, pulling down the last stones of a partition.

"I smell the harbour!" cried Emma, wrinkling up her nose. "Give me the lantern and I'll explore, for I vowed to Lord Nelson that if there was a secret passage I'd discover it!"

Carolina put out a restraining hand. "Miledi, no; we will drive a dog along it first; if it comes back alive we will then send the meanest servant."

"Ma'am, there is no danger! And we have no time to be cautious! When I have climbed over, hand me the lantern!" In a trice Emma was across the barricade and looking back at the startled white faces of the royal family.

"I shall come with you, Miledi," Ferdinando announced. "I will follow just behind; by that means you will save me breaking my head against the roof: Nature never designed me for a burrowing animal."

Emma was acutely dismayed. "Let me go alone; your life is too valuable to risk!"

"If necessary, Miledi, we will die together. There! I give you the lantern and follow behind. What would my good friend the Cavaliere say if I permitted you to go alone?"

"Sir Will'um might think it my privilege to preserve Your Majesty," Emma diplomatically retorted.

"Chivalry comes before sovereignty!"

Deprived of an alternative, Emma started off down the passage, speeded by a chorus of benedictions from the royal ladies. The lantern revealed a narrow tunnel cut through rock; it was dry, and, for sixty feet or more kept an even course; then the floor gradually dipped. Emma went swiftly, eager to be done with an adventure that had become distasteful; Ferdinando followed in close pursuit. His broad shoulders rasped against the rock, his head was bent so low that his hot breath scorched Emma's neck. Shooting out his hand, he pulled her up by the waist. "Why do you hurry? There is time for pleasure even in danger, *datemi un bacio!*"

"Kiss you? Are you quite a fool? Had I wanted to, sure, I'd have made an opportunity before now! Leave go, or I'll scream, and I warn you I can yell loud enough to be heard from a tomb."

Ferdinando withdrew his large red hand. "You are a vixen!" he

sulkily rejoined. "And what harm is there? We must all be allowed our relaxations."

"But you're not minel!" Emma went on at a run, until her feet began to slip; glancing down, she saw the rock was wet and overgrown with green weed. The passage turned, widened and brought them into daylight filtering through apertures in a half-submerged grating. A platform wide enough to provide access to a boat was hewn from the rock that terminated the long, narrow tunnel.

"*Per buona ventura*, we shall escape safely!" Ferdinando exclaimed with great satisfaction. "The only obstacle is the grille."

"And no slight one either! How do you mean to open it? Boatmen are outside all the while, and if they hear a blacksmith hammering, 'twill be good-bye to secrecy."

"At night, no one will hear." Ferdinando's sulky voice was superior.

Emma did not answer. Grasping the ironwork and putting her toes into convenient holes, she climbed across the back of the grille, careless that her skirt dipped into the harbour scum. She found that half a dozen stout prongs fitting into sockets in the stone enabled the barrier to be raised like a lid and secured to a bolt in the roof. On returning to the rock she explained the simplicity of the device to Ferdinando.

"You have got a brain, Lady Hamilton," he reluctantly admitted; "had your birth allowed you to be a Queen you might have left a name to be remembered!"

On the return journey the King again displayed an amatory disposition and again was held in check. "Had you been a commoner you might have escaped being a fool," she said, slapping his face indulgently. When she chose, Emma could rebuke with the *camaraderie* of a barmaid; such rebuffs left no sting.

"Lady Hamilton is a woman of spirit," Ferdinando assured Carolina: "exploring that passage was a dangerous venture, we didn't know if the next step would mean death, yet she never faltered—I didn't show more courage myself!"

"Miledi is a true Englishwoman!" said the Queen, kissing her friend. "I thank you a thousand times for your services to me and mine—you can count on my gratitude to eternity!"

Emma got back to Palazzo Sessa with an hour to spare before dinner. She found her mother completing the household packing. Sir William had decreed that blankets, linen and silver must be taken in addition to personal luggage. Twelve cases were ready, and, like

the boxes containing royal treasures, were marked in Mrs. Cadogan's firm characters: "Stores for Nelson."

"Did you write the labels for the Queen's money?" Emma inquired.

"Yes—over there on the console, thirty-six of them. I've marked them 'Butter for Nelson,' seeing the gold is packed in tubs."

"That will look very well unless some doubting Thomas lifts one up—then he'll know at once that no butter ever weighed so heavy."

"Lord Nelson is sending a party of marines to guard the waggons, and Captain Hope will be here himself to make certain that none but his own seamen handle anything!"

"My God, I'll be thankful when everything is safe on board. Where's a hammer?"

"Under your eyes, gal; and don't tack the labels on top of the tubs, because the wood is tender there."

Friday morning opened brightly, but the wind was still fresh and waves racing across the bay were flecked with white foam. The *Vanguard* and *Alcmene* had moved farther from the shore and nearer to Portici, with the *Sannite* anchored between them; all three ships lay inside the Portuguese Squadron, which, with the exception of the *Principe Reale* and the *São Affonso* were remaining at Naples to destroy the Neapolitan fleet should a French advance render it necessary. British transport victuallers, Neapolitan merchant-men and two Greek *polaccas* freighted by Sir William to accommodate French and Corsican emigrants were moored in the *Cratere*; thus no ship was within range of the forts. But the roadstead was not deserted: barges and jolly-boats passed back and forth between warships and merchant-men.

Squeamish fugitives, who were to embark after dark, gazed apprehensively at the small boats tossing like cockle-shells. Among the most fearful was Carry Graeffe, soliciting Emma's influence in her favour.

"How would you like to be going on Caracciolo's dirty boat?" she demanded. "It hasn't got a crew that's ever worked together before, and who's to say that the Neapolitan sailors who've been scraped together won't murder the English and Portuguese seamen out of spite? Shouldn't we look nice, adrift on the ocean, at the mercy of a lot of cut-throats? Emma, you must ask Lord Nelson to let us go with you and Sir William on the *Vanguard*. After all, 'tis our right—we Britishers should have priority over foreigners, even if

they are royalty! Why don't the King and Queen go on the *Sannite* if it's such a nice safe boat?"

"Lord Nelson has instructions from England to save Their Sicilian Majesties if their lives are in danger—and they are. His Lordship cannot take responsibility for their safety in any but his own flagship; there'll be room for no English on board but Sir Will'um, mother and me. 'Twill be no pleasure trip, I can tell you, for if the voyage be stormy, Mam and I will be doing the work *castrati* do ashore!"

"I shall be sick myself, I never could stand rocking about," Carry wailed. "You're not a bit sorry for us, Emma; you're selfish through and through! So long as you are on the top, you never think of others less fortunate! What is going to happen to us when we get to Palermo? Will there be a garden for Mr. Graeffier to lay out? And if there isn't, will the King go on paying his salary?"

"You should know that better than I, I'm not in His Majesty's confidence!"

Carry looked wrathfully at her friend. "Emma, 'tis no wonder you have enemies. Hard women are never really liked!"

Emma laughed with great good humour. "*Duwch*, gal, you do talk some nonsense! But I've no time to listen."

"Then you won't help me to go on the *Vanguard*?"

"My dear, I can't!"

"Cat!" said Carry vindictively.

Emma, Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan were still packing valuables into boxes, valuables that must be left behind.

"We shall see what sort of respect the French will show me," Sir William sighed as he folded an ivory Venus in an old silk handkerchief. "Certainly for thirty-five years I have been hospitable to many French travellers, and perhaps they may not plunder my house."

"Look on the bright side, Sir," advised Mrs. Cadogan; "the vases and your best pictures are safe in the transport."

"Ye do right to remind me of my debt to Lord Nelson; thanks to his friendship the cream of my collection in the *Colossus* should now be reaching England."

"And Henry Smith will take care of everything here and at Caserta; 'tis wise to leave the Legation running as if we was coming back."

"I shan't be able to maintain longer than a month a pack of servants doing nothing—we shall have to live at Palermo. The English will certainly flock there, and, as hitherto, will regard my house as John Bull's hotel."

Elaborate plans had been evolved for the secret embarkation. To allay suspicion, Sir William, Lord Nelson, Emma and Mrs. Cadogan accepted an invitation from the Duchessa di Miranda to a display of new figures added to her *Presepe*. Valued at ten thousand ducats, the *Presepe* was the most beautiful in Naples, and an invitation to see its fresh arrangement was an important event in the Christmas calendar. The party began at "two hours of the night," or 7.40 by English Log time; Captain Hope of the *Alcmene* had secret orders to be at the Molesiglio at 7.30 with three barges and a small cutter.

Soon after seven Lord Nelson reached Palazzo Sessa and found Emma alone in the mirror-room. She wore a sapphire-blue velvet gown and a fur-lined white cloak with a hood. At her feet lay a bundle tied in a black cloth.

"Pray God all goes well," she fervently exclaimed. "We have ordered supper here at eleven o'clock; by that time I hope we shall all be safe aboard the *Vanguard*. The servants are having a little Christmas party in their quarters, which should keep *them* out of the way!"

"How far away is Palazzo Miranda?"

"Just round the corner in Piazza de' Martiri—so near that no one would be surprised at our walking. Sir Will'um has ordered the coach to fetch us in two hours' time, but of course we shall not go to the party, but quite the other way!"

Nelson paced up and down, carrying his watch in his hand and frequently consulted it. "My Lady, how long do you think Sir William will be?—time is passing."

"I'll fetch him—he bids good-bye to the things he loves."

Ten minutes later a party of six left by the postern door into Vico Santa Maria. Sir William carried a valise, and was armed with a brace of pistols and a sword. Emma and Mrs. Cadogan both had large bundles; Gaetano Spedillo and Giulia, Emma's maid, were so heavily burdened that they resembled pack-mules. Lord Nelson's inability to help Emma caused him much distress.

"Damme, I never felt the loss of my arm so greatly till this moment, but a pistol and a sword is all I can manage."

"This bundle is light as a feather; to let you into a secret, 'tis the padded quilt from Sir Will'um's bed that was forgot. 'Tisn't like the bundle I carried as a young maid when I went to my first situation in London Town. All I owned was in it; a pair of clogs and my Bible weighed eight pounds between them, and the whole lot felt

like a ton before I'd lumped them halfway to Chester, where I was to take the slow waggon."

"Poor little maid!" the Admiral's voice sounded husky.

"When I was nigh dropping I met an old countryman, who told me to carry my burden on my head, like this!" To eyes grown accustomed to the dark, Emma could dimly be seen, a graceful caryatid balancing an unwieldy load down the steep steps of the rampa.

The Chiatamone was deserted; conversation was rendered difficult by the splash of waves breaking against the sea wall. After passing the causeway to Castel dell' Uovo, Lord Nelson led the way to a disused flight of steps, and, putting two fingers into his mouth, whistled shrilly. The summons was answered. There came the sound of muffled oars; in a moment the dark shape of a boat could be seen. As she came alongside, Captain Hope sprang on to the steps.

"Well, here we are again!"

"Is everything all right?" Lord Nelson demanded.

"Ay, Ay, Sir! Everything's in trim. The grille to the secret passage is hove up, and Count Thurn is on guard at the Molesiglio; two barges and the small cutter are lying on their oars outside the rocks, according to your orders, Sir!"

With the aid of seamen's horny hands the British Minister and his party scrambled to the stern-sheets; Captain Hope took the tiller; Lord Nelson sat between him and Emma. There was no canopy or shelter; as the boat rounded the small promontory that protected Santa Lucia a large wave struck her amidships and splashed over Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan.

"Thank God for my old military cloak," said the Minister. "Emma would have had me wear something less antiquated, but I know the value of my old and well-tried friend. As an Ensign I slept in this when serving in Flanders under the Duke of Cumberland." Memory offered to Sir William pictures that eclipsed in vivid drama any current adventure, but no response came from those whose visions were in the making. Captain Hope had his eyes on the line of foam marking the shoal; Lord Nelson looked out for armed boats from the *Vanguard*; Emma gazed at his sharp profile outlined against the glare of Santa Lucia.

Every stall along the quay was illuminated for *le feste di Natale* with flambeaux lashed to awning-frames. Rippling in the wind, their golden flames cast pulsing light over the high façades of balconied tenements, draped with washing and fishing-nets. Under the yellow

glow people could be seen surging round stalls laden with *capitone* and *susamiello* and pushing for good places in front of Pulcinella's theatre. "*A-i! Quaglio', sta attent'!*" The puppet's shrill squeaks dominated a babble of voices, explosions of crackers and the Christmas *lamento* of the *Zampognari* playing before the shrine of Santa Maria della Catena. Reflections from the quay stretched in shuddering golden tracks to break against the rocks; beyond the reef Lord Nelson's barge stealthily moved in darkness towards looming shapes of marine storehouses.

Captain Hope softly hailed three boats from the *Vanguard*; the barge moved on and drew alongside the Molesiglio. A shadowy form stepped to the edge of the jetty. "Boat ahoy!"

Lord Nelson gave the password: "All is safe and well!"

Lifting the shutter of his lantern, Count Thurn threw downwards a beam of light which revealed the yawning arch to the secret passage.

"Will she go through?" Sir William anxiously inquired.

No one answered. With their hands the seamen manœuvred the boat through the aperture and alongside the platform of rock upon which lanterns had been set to throw light towards the passage and faintly to illuminate the cavern. Disembarking, Captain Hope and Tom Allen took the cutlasses and pistols handed out by the coxswain; Admiral Nelson threw off his cloak and felt if his sword was loose in its scabbard before stepping from the boat.

Emma prepared to follow. "I'm coming too!"

He looked down into her eager face. "My Lady, don't. If it comes to a fight, as it may do, my anxiety for your safety might make me forget my duty."

"Give me a cutlass," she cried, "and I'll show you that I can cut off a Jacobin head."

"Remain where you are, Emma; this is no time for heroics," Sir William said testily.

Her face flushed angrily, but it became gentle when Nelson said, so low that only she could hear: "Stay and be my guardian angel!"

Captain Hope, the Admiral's coxswain, Tom Allen and a couple of marines followed Lord Nelson into the passage; their footsteps became fainter and fainter and died away. Nobody spoke. A seaman cut a fid of tobacco and started to chew; Giulia fell asleep with her head on her bundle; Mrs. Cadogan produced a white stocking she was knitting for Lord Nelson's Christmas present and began to turn the heel. Seconds dragged into minutes, minutes stretched into eter-

nity. Water lapped softly against the cavern walls; dull thuds recorded Count Thurn's measured pacing on the rock overhead; a man made a retching noise as he ejected a squirt of tobacco juice; Mrs. Cadogan's knitting-needles clicked. "One purl, two plain," she muttered.

Emma's eyes followed the dark brown nicotine slowly trickling down the grey rock, thence her gaze travelled up to fringes of green weed hanging from the grille drawn up to the roof.

Pulling out his watch, Sir William slanted it to the light. "Nearly twenty minutes," he reported.

"Is that all?" Sighing, Emma wriggled into an easier position. "We seem to have been sitting here for a century."

Sir William rose and gingerly climbed out of the boat; his knees were stiff and for a moment would not straighten. Looking grave and engrossed, he stood moving his legs up and down, actions duplicated by a gaunt shadow with a large, beak-like nose. Having limbered his joints, he turned to examine the cavern walls by passing his sensitive hands over cracks and grooves. "This place bears a singular resemblance to the caverns excavated in the tufa at Cumae, from whence the Sibyl Deiphobe pronounced the oracles. I should think it dates, approximately, from B.C. 600. Your discovery, my dear Em, makes me additionally loath to leave Naples. What a paper I could have written on't for the Royal Society!"

Emma paid no heed; her keen ears heard footsteps and low voices coming from the passage. Scrambling out of the boat, she stood on the rock beside Sir William. In a moment the cavern was invaded by nervous fugitives whose powdered heads and modish garb looked unreal against a stark background. The Queen rushed to Emma and clasped her hands.

"My dear, I am bewildered and lost! All day unfortunate people appealed to me who could not save themselves, but what could I do? Poor Vanni shot himself this morning; how I reproach myself! My head is quite gone, but I shall place myself in the hands of Divine Providence and be contented!"

"This cockle-shell will never take us all!" said Ferdinando.

"Three large barges are at the wharf," Lord Nelson answered. "As they've too much beam to get through yonder entrance, passengers must be ferried outside in this small boat, when they will be transferred to a larger one. I suggest that Your Majesties, the Hereditary Princess, her infant, its nurse and the two young princes re-

main to the last and embark in this boat with Sir William, Lady Hamilton and myself."

"I would be gone at once," said Carolina. "At any moment our flight may be discovered and the mob come down upon us crying for vengeance. I shall tremble until the ten innocent persons of our household are under the protection of the British flag."

"The staircase door is locked, and Captain Hope and our marines guard the passage until Your Majesties embark."

Ferdinando stepped into the barge. "My Lord, it is better to change boats outside than to be caught. Come on, *ma femme*." With a jerk of his head the King indicated that Carolina was to follow.

"I won't go without my devoted Mimi!"

"I come, Mama! See, I step into the boat before you!" said Princess Marie Amélie, smiling at her mother.

Mrs. Cadogan, Gaetano and Giulia relinquished their places and with difficulty wedged themselves among royalty. Standing on the edge of the rock, Emma handed down Prince Albert and Princess Clementina's infant, so tightly strapped in swaddling-clothes that it was stiff as a piece of wood. When the family were settled, Lord Nelson took the tiller and the boat was manœuvred out of the cavern.

There was now room on the rock to accommodate refugees who had been compelled to wait in the passage. The Imperial and Prussian Ministers, Prince Castalcicala, Prince Belmonte, the Duke of Gravina and General Acton made their appearance. With the Prime Minister came his niece, Mary Anne. She wore a white velvet pelisse, a bonnet trimmed with pink feathers, and an ermine tippet that matched a huge muff. With one hand she clung to her uncle, with the other she held her muff coquettishly to her face.

"Good evening, evewybody." Her artless glance slipped past Emma and Mrs. Cadogan to rest on the diplomats.

Count Esterhazy received her salutation with pleasure. "Made-moiselle, your presence will bring sweetness to this lamentable journey!"

"I'll do my best to amuse!" said Mary Anne, showing a dimple.

"Have you been on the sea before, bach?" inquired Mrs. Cadogan.

Mary Anne gave Signora Madre a pert stare. "Oh yes; in the summer I'm out evewy evening in Sir John's bawge!"

"Perhaps you'll be sick in a man-of-war."

"If I am, I shall be vewy surprised!"

The *Vanguard's* boat returned, but without Lord Nelson; he sent

a message through his coxswain which Sir William whispered to Emma. "Nelson regrets he had no choice but to accompany Their Majesties; he recommends our going in the last boat with Hope and Count Thurn."

One by one the courtiers stepped off the rock, until only the Imperial Minister remained. "With your permission, my dear Chevalier, I wait for the less crowded boat which I overheard is recommended by the great Admiral."

Count Francis Esterhazy was tall and of an elegant figure. He had a sallow complexion, auburn hair and eyes as green as those of a cat. Though richly dressed, he was not a strict observer of fashion, and took delight in startling Naples with bizarre innovations. On this night he wore a voluminous green cloak with a long pointed Capuchin cowl; his tricorne hat had a ruche of white ostrich feathers inside the brim; his vivid hair was unpowdered and tied with a brown ribbon.

"*Mon Dieu!* What a scene—elegant rats quitting the sinking ship!" His Excellency watched the boat-load of Court *émigrés* disappearing into outer darkness. "We escape just in time, I think. By to-morrow we should all be in danger of losing our heads: 'tis unlikely the mob would discriminate between Neapolitan and foreign aristocrats. Though at the moment the *lazzaroni* profess themselves Royalist, they will soon be dancing round the Tree of Liberty with their cousins, the *sans culottes*. I suppose you have heard that Vanni shot himself this morning?"

"So Her Majesty informed Lady Hamilton—I confess 'twas no surprise. His zeal as chief assessor to the *Giunta di Stato* made him enemies in every class, and his doom was sealed when Don Luigi di Medici and others he condemned were released. Vanni was wise to escape vengeance. It is preferable to take one's life in privacy than to be deprived of it by the mob under most unseemly conditions!"

"I agree with you! Vanni well earned his sobriquet, 'The White Terror of Naples.' Curious to ennoble him—a man of the people if ever there was one! It must be presumed that Castalcicala and Guidobaldi declined to share a triple crown with a plebeian. I thought another member of the *giunta* looked a trifle pale. No one, I fancy, will feel more relieved to quit Naples under the protection of England and My Lord Nelson than our friend Prince Castalcicala!" The Imperial Minister brought out his snuff-box and negligently offered it to Sir William. "Will your Excellency honour me? a special blend

from Vienna!" The gold box was decorated with a miniature of a naked Venus set round with brilliants. From the tail of her eye Emma recognized it as an excellent portrait of the Count's mistress, even to the bleached hair favoured by women from Avellino.

For the third and last time the *Vanguard's* boat entered the cavern. With great gallantry Count Esterhazy assisted Mrs. Cadogan to step down, and he steadied her tenderly as the boat rocked under the impact. "I'm not so nimble as I was, Sir!" she remarked in good humour.

"Madame, you will never grow old!" he asserted, with his hand pressed to his heart.

While the coxswain went up the passage to report the embarkation completed, the refugees settled themselves in the stern-sheets.

"In fleeing, were you obliged to leave many valuables, My Lady?" Count Esterhazy politely inquired of Emma.

"My gala clothes, a lot of music and books. The things I've saved befit a simple life—except my diamonds."

"Sir William is indeed to be congratulated—I know few among the fair willing to relinquish grandeur."

"I've heard it said that a man gets the wife he deserves," Emma responded graciously.

Captain Hope and the marines returned shivering from their cold vigil. "My God, I'd have welcomed a fight with a few *lazzaroni* as a means to get warm," said the sea officer, putting his numbed hands around the lantern.

The boat cleared the archway and Captain Hope extinguished the candle. After Emma's eyes got used to darkness she saw many boats waiting off the Molesiglio. "There's another embarkation of Court officials and servants in an hour," the sea officer said, "and a large number of people to go in the *Sannite*. Happily for me, Caracciolo takes command. I don't fancy he relishes the job."

"He feels extremely bitter at the part assigned to him," Count Esterhazy remarked. "I ventured to warn Their Majesties not to slight their best officer by making their escape in a foreign vessel."

Emma answered indignantly: "Twasn't likely the Queen would trust herself and her family to a ship that a few days ago hadn't a crew to take her to sea, and only has one now thanks to Lord Nelson and the Marquis de Niza!" While she spoke Count Thurn climbed over the edge of the quay and dropped into the boat. He took the vacant seat beside the Imperial Minister, who immediately addressed

his compatriot: "Am I wrong in thinking Caracciolo was mortified by Their Majesties' electing to sail with Lord Nelson in preference to himself?"

"The Brigadiere is wounded and angered," Count Thurn slowly responded. "He speaks of nothing but the slight inflicted on him and the Neapolitan Marine. Doubtless I should feel likewise in a similar position; but I am an Austrian, a mercenary in a foreign navy, and my national pride is untouched. Judging without passion, I say in confidence: Their Majesties are wise not to trust Neapolitan officers."

The seamen pulled strongly on their oars and the boat moved swiftly towards the *Vanguard*, clearly defined by a masthead light and stern-lanterns.

Wondering at Sir William's silence, Emma turned and touched his arm. "Look, we're nearly there! Aren't you glad? We shall be with Lord Nelson again, *tria juncta in uno*, as you call us."

Sir William took her hand and patted it. "My dear, it is different for you, but for me this journey means the end of an epoch. To-night I say farewell to habits that have formed my life for nearly thirty-five years, and at my age, Emma, habit is life itself."



CHAPTER NINETEEN

CAPTAIN HARDY and the First Lieutenant had been unsparing in their endeavours to make the *Vanguard* comfortable for the royal fugitives. Fresh paint, the sailor's anodyne, was freely applied, and had not yet dried. The ward-room, relegated to His Majesty, Prince Francesco, courtiers and diplomats, smelt like an oil-and-colourman's, and caused those with queasy stomachs to look at a number of copper washing-bowls wedged behind a batten. Fortunately for the Queen and the Princesses, time curtailed the First Lieutenant's ambitions, and the Admiral's quarters had escaped with a few desultory swipes. Six new cots for the royal ladies hung from beams in Lord Nelson's sleeping apartment; on the deck of the forecabin a few hard and narrow mattresses lay about for the comfort of a large retinue of noblewomen, female attendants and servants. The King and his suite were supplied with stiff new hammocks smelling of hemp; few ventured to try them. Those who did so fell out, His Majesty's confessor, Don Giuseppe Garano, fracturing his arm. Sheets and blankets there were none, every case of bedclothes from Palazzo Sessa having been taken in error to the transport *Samuel and Jane*.

At midnight twenty-two members of the royal household arrived in the *Vanguard's* boats, but there was no sign of the Mesdames of France, who were expected to embark at the same time. Their non-arrival invoked fresh fears in the Queen's mind.

"To avoid arousing suspicion the old Demoiselles were to embark from Portici at about eight o'clock, but if the swell there would not permit a boat to put out, they had instructions to drive on to Naples and come off with the last of our household."

Emma and the Queen stood in the stern gallery; two lanterns high above their heads, and hidden from them by the projecting cove, poured light on the black water which caused each ripple to shine like

broken pieces of thick bottle glass. Stern lanterns were also alight in the Portuguese ships *Principe Reale*, *Rainha de Portugal* and *São Affonso*; but the *Sannite* showed only a gangway lamp. Small boats, crowded with refugees, appeared momentarily as they swam in and out of the reflections from the warships. Sometimes a white face looked up and a voice shouted: "*Viva il Re! Viva la Regina!*"

"How much longer shall I be a Queen?" Carolina's mournful voice inquired of the dark night. "We flee to Sicily, but do not know the temper of the islanders. Perhaps they will love us no better than do the Neapolitans."

"The common people here are loyal, Ma'am; 'tis the nobility and Jacks-in-office who are traitors."

"And the *illuminés*—every one of the struggling students whom I helped to fame has turned into a bitter enemy. I feel no anger at the betrayal, only sorrow!"

It was chilly in the night air, but inside the cabin the atmosphere was scarcely warmer. Captain Hardy's preparations had fallen short of a fire, and the Princesses sat shivering in outdoor clothes. The Hereditary Princess had a cough that racked her fragile body; she sat hunched in a chair watching with reluctant fascination her swaddled infant nuzzling and tugging at the large breast of its nurse. Attendants crowded the cabin; Madame Chatelain knelt before an open coffer, throwing garments upon the deck as she searched for the Queen's night-sack.

"What confusion!" the Queen moaned. "The effect of this horrible break-up is destructive to two-thirds of our existence and our accustomed habits. Like hundreds of others, we are robbed by the accursed French of the comforts of civilisation, and even of privacy."

Emma and Sir William were fortunate in having a cabin for their exclusive use, a small box-like compartment made of bulk-heads which came down when the ship was cleared for action. It was under the Admiral's fore-cabin and close to the ward-room, and was reached either from the waist or by one of the quarter-deck ladders.

Two bells struck as Emma gingerly made her way from one deck to the other, and, after ducking beneath sleepers snoring in hammocks slung outside the ward-room, found the door she was seeking. A candle, guttering in conflicting draughts, revealed Sir William lying in the cot and peeping with a jaundiced brown eye between folds of a blanket. A mattress spread upon the deck tripped Emma and she fell, striking her shoulder against the partition. Getting up, she

rubbed herself ruefully. Sir William sympathetically clicked his tongue.

"We shall soon be used to these cramped quarters," he hastened to assure her. "If ye look in yonder corner you'll see my cloak hanging on a peg; with it and that good mattress you should be very comfortable."

Emma's shoulder still recorded her tumble. "Sir Will'um, I don't mind sleeping on the floor, but I do object to the way a man takes the best for himself while making believe that the woman has the good bargain. I'd scorn to be so mean as to take both comfort and credit!"

Sir William threw back the blanket, sat up and cast a thin yellow leg over the cot's canvas side. "At my age, Emma, I had not imagined ye would grudge me this very slight advantage; but by all means let us change. I have no desire to get the better of you, as your words imply."

"Sir Will'um, you know I don't want the best place; you are twisting what I said on purpose! I want the pleasure of performing a kind act, but you rob me of it by making believe you are being generous to me! Don't you see how unfair it is?"

"No, my dear Emma, I do not; but we will settle the matter by changing places."

"That we won't, Sir Will'um!" she cried, flinging herself flat on the mattress, "I want justice, not the best bed!"

"And I want peace and quiet—by your temper ye make life perfectly impossible!" For a few seconds the Minister's bony shin continued to wave over the edge of the cot, repudiating allegations of selfishness, then it withdrew into the blankets. Sighing, Sir William turned over.

Immediately Emma was swept by contrition. God! was there ever a woman so selfish? . . . To begrudge an old man the happiness of overlording like a young one. . . . Tears filled her eyes and seeped between her long black lashes.

Unaccustomed sounds imposed themselves on her consciousness, engendering excitement and lively anticipation. Five short months ago cannon had thundered from the port behind Sir Will'um's cot, bringing defeat and death to the enemy. . . . The deep groves in the deck were scored by wheels when the guns recoiled. . . . Perhaps Nelson had stood on this spot directing the fire. . . . 'Twas a privilege to lie on boards impressed with so much honour. . . .

Where, she wondered, was Lord Nelson sleeping? . . . Did he lie awake too, listening to timbers creaking and the lap of water against the hull? . . . Was it possible that he thought of Emma Hamilton? . . .

She heard each half-hour struck, and at eight bells listened to the scamper of bare feet as the watch on deck changed. After an interval, "Little One Bell" rang softly through the darkness. Soon afterwards Emma fell asleep, to be roused in affright by the stentorian voice of the boatswain's mate.

"OUT OR DOWN THERE! OUT OR DOWN THERE! All hands rouse out, rouse out, rouse out. Lash and carry, lash and carry; show a leg or else a Purser's stocking. Rouse and shine, rouse and shine. L-a-s-h up and stow! L-a-s-h up and stow! L-a-s-h up and stow!"

The candle had guttered to its end, leaving the cabin pitch black; Sir William snored peacefully, so did the King and his suite in the adjacent ward-room. Emma tossed irritably on the narrow mattress that had become hardly more accommodating than the deck. Presently she heard water splashing on the decks, followed by the harsh rasping of holy-stones. A streak of light filtered between the port-lids; the Marquis de Niza fired his morning gun; a drummer on board the *Vanguard* sounded the *reveillé*.

Emma rose with alacrity, enveloped herself in her cloak, quitted the stuffy cabin and ran into the open air. In lines across the wet sanded deck seamen knelt, rhythmically jerking up and down, swinging with the heavy stones they clasped in their hands. As she climbed to the quarter-deck, Emma looked back over her shoulder. Every man had his gaze fixed admiringly upon her, one, a burly waister with a lewd eye and a gay handkerchief tied over his head, gave a quick look round before blowing a kiss.

Having had no opportunity to wash or to brush her hair, Emma was disconcerted to find Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy breakfasting in the coach, an antechamber to the Admiral's quarters, the floor of which was formed by the aftermost part of the quarter-deck and the roof by the under part of the poop. Both officers rose and smiled a welcome, Lord Nelson dragged an extra chair to the table.

"Did you rest?" he anxiously inquired. "I fear you had but rough accommodation, and I could not sleep for thinking how ill I was repaying the kindness and attention you have lavished on me and the officers of my squadron. What a difference—but it has to be—from your palace to a ship!"

"Do you think me such a fine lady that I can't put up with a little discomfort in a great cause. We have rescued my dear adorable Queen, whom I love better than any person in the world," Emma declared, warming to her theme.

Lord Nelson looked crestfallen. "Her Majesty is fortunate in such a friend. The royal family, as well as myself, are under great obligations to your Ladyship."

"What nonsense! We all owe everything to you: our liberty and perhaps our heads as well. Sir Will'm believes that if we had waited a day longer we should have found ourselves in prison—but you saved us—*Nostro Liberatore, nostro Salvatore.*"

Yielding to persuasion, Emma sat down to a breakfast of *cicirelli*—fish resembling whitebait and esteemed a great delicacy—strong cocoa and bread. She ate with relish. "I hadn't thought how hungry I was, but only what a draggletail I look. Last night was the first time since I was a young maid that I went to bed with a dirty face. Indeed, I'm ashamed to *face* the light, and I'm glad 'tis a dull morning."

"Tom Allen shall bring a jug of boiling water from the galley," Lord Nelson promised.

Emma sighed rapturously. "What it is to have a friend at Court! "

When the other refugees rose at seven bells, Emma was in splendid fettle; not so the Queen, the Princesses and their ladies-in-waiting, who were all bedraggled and out of humour.

"What I suffer I am unable to express," moaned Maria Carolina. "Why didn't we bring a brazier instead of diamonds? We have shivered all night, the children cried and would not be pacified, the cough of my daughter-in-law has disturbed us all—she is undoubtedly in a consumption. Alas! Will any of us survive these tribulations? So unmerited and so unjust! "

The King came to breakfast with his family. His face was long, and he appeared much out of humour. "I have just learnt that Lord Nelson has ordered the *Guiscardo*, *San Joachim* and *Tancredi* to be burnt. At this moment two Portuguese Commodores and the Captain of the *Principe Reale* are putting the order into effect. By noon our beautiful ships will be bonfires! "

Carolina screamed: "It must be stopped! My God, did you not tell Milord what those ships cost to build? "

"Of course I told him, but he said that could not be helped and only made it additionally necessary to prevent them falling into

French hands. His Lordship says, all our marine that cannot sail with the convoy must be destroyed, so we lose every Ship of the Line except the *Sannite*!”

“We cannot submit to that—I will myself explain to the brave Admiral. Our son Leopold, who worships the hero, shall find Milord Nelson and ask him to come.” Carolina turned pleadingly to Emma: “Miledi, when our liberator arrives, add your voice to ours—persuade him to save our navy.”

Lord Nelson quickly responded to the summons, but showed unwillingness to rescind his orders. “King George, my Royal Master, instructed me to give every assistance in my power to Your Majesties and your royal family—this I am happy to have fulfilled, but I cannot consistently with the good of the common cause risk such a considerable naval force falling into enemy hands.”

“But Milord! Consider!” cried Carolina. “If you will but save our ships you can take them under your command to do with as you wish. Doubtless they would achieve great records if manned by your brave nation, though worthless when sailed by our infamous cowards!”

Ferdinando protested: “Our men are well enough; ’tis the officers who are cowards.”

“I advised you to put Austrians in all posts of authority,” Carolina retorted.

“Austrians!” Ferdinando scoffed. “Austrians!”

“Count Thurn is an Austrian!”

“Yes, and I’ll admit he is a very good officer,” Ferdinando generously replied.

Emma did not translate the marital bickering: save by the cryptonym: “Squabbling”. Meanwhile Lord Nelson impatiently waited to break in.

“I much appreciate Your Majesties’ offer to place the Neapolitan marine under the British flag, and you may rest assured that if the ships could be navigated I would not propose destroying them. But unless they are towed they cannot be moved. General Fortiguerra received most positive instructions from His Majesty to procure and send off such spars and stores as might be necessary to rig the ships with jury-masts, but nothing has been delivered.”

“Fortiguerra—I might have known,” Carolina muttered bitterly. “He it was who disgraced us at the evacuation of Toulon.”

"*Ma femme*, recalling past humiliations does not help us to keep our marine! Milord Nelson, is there no means of saving even one of our fine 74's? Will you not postpone the burning at least until the French approach Naples?"

"I will go myself and see what can be done," Lord Nelson promised, and prepared to take his leave, "but no risks must be taken."

After the Admiral had gone, King Ferdinando sent for a rod and line and started to fish from the stern gallery; the Queen pretended to be engrossed in a small volume entitled *Poésie Varié* by Clemente Filomarino; Emma, the Princesses, Mrs. Cadogan and Mary Anne Acton played *mouche*. They had finished one game and started another when General Acton and Sir William hurriedly entered.

"Many boats are approaching from the shore," the Prime Minister announced, "one is already alongside bringing Edigio Palli and his *lazzaroni*. They cry out entreating Your Majesties to return, and declare they will fight the French and keep them out of the city."

"And so they should!" Ferdinando retorted, "but I don't intend to remain to be cut into mincemeat, and I won't see them!"

"Several of the nobility also approach, and I saw the Archbishop's barge."

"But is Cardinal Zurlo in it?" Ferdinando anxiously inquired.

Sir William playfully tapped the King's arm. "Your Majesty cannot escape. His Eminence is supported by a deputation of abbots and priests."

"Then I'll meet the Cardinal on deck and not invite him into the cabin—ecclesiastics shrink from fresh air, and it blows a *vento di tramontana*." Thrusting his fishing-rod into Sir William's hand, Ferdinando added: "There are some fat red mullet down there; after my troublesome visitors have gone we will borrow a boat and go nearer Portici, where there will be many more fish."

The King and General Acton went on deck. Emma joined Sir William in the stern gallery. "I wonder how long 'twill be before we sail—except for leaving dear, dear Naples, the sooner we set forth the better I shall be pleased."

"Nelson won't quit the bay until the transports are filled. A good deal of merchandise must be embarked—I've seen scores of heavily laden boats leave the shore—but I don't suppose the stuff can be stowed and the transports ready to sail before to-morrow."

"Lud! I wouldn't complain if the Queen and the Princesses would

brave the elements, but they will stay huddled in the cabin that has grown stuffy without being warm."

"Fortunately the smell of paint in the ward-room compels the company to open the gallery windows."

The *Alcmene* was moored astern of the *Vanguard*, and Emma could see Kelim Effendi sheltering from the wind under the poop. A shawl covered his shoulders, but purple silk pantaloons were the sole protection for his legs. To warm himself he leapt into the air, cutting an *entrechat* higher than Vestris; his canary-yellow slippers flapped from his bare heels, and the tail of his turban flew above his head.

"Lord Nelson reserves for Captain Nisbet the honour of carrying Kelim Effendi to Constantinople," Sir William remarked, "but the young cub seems in no hurry to claim the benefit. Should the *Bonne Citoyenne* not be at Palermo when we arrive, I fear Nelson will be put to some embarrassment."

"You don't like poor Josiah, do you, Sir Will'm?"

"I never care for pretension without manner, my dear."

Emma's reply was drowned by the forceful opening of the door behind them as the King emerged.

"Did you get a bite?" His Majesty inquired.

"Devil a one!"

"I'll take you to a sandy patch below La Favorita where we will have good sport—Captain Hardy is sending for the *Alcmene's* small cutter."

"I hope that won't put Captain Hope to inconvenience," Sir William demurred. "We might repay his civility by giving him our catch?"

"I'd give him more than that for putting me in the way of entertainment."

Emma smiled upon the King. "Won't Your Majesty tell us what you said to the Archbishop?"

"Oh, I was firm with him." Ferdinando thrust his hands into his breeches' pockets. "I said, 'I by no means intend to abandon Naples, but the circumstances of the times compel me to remove myself and my family to a more tranquil part of my dominions.' Cardinal Zurlo expressed the opinion that peace would be assured if I remained with my people in the capital. There I begged to differ—I said, 'I cannot agree that witnessing murder is peaceful.' The Cardinal re-

plied that the killing of Louis Franzolin was certainly unfortunate, but he would promise on behalf of the *lazzaroni* that it would not occur again. I told him, 'Not even San Gennaro can restore a corpse.' But we parted well. 'The Neapolitans have enough force to repel the enemy,' were my words; 'if they behave as loyal subjects and do their duty I and my family will return with pleasure to the capital.'

"You couldn't have spoken more fairly," Sir William acknowledged.

Emma accompanied the fishermen to the quarter-deck and watched them embark with the Duca di Gravina in the *Alcmene's* cutter and steer for the shallows near Herculaneum. The sun had disappeared and the sea looked leaden; low-hanging clouds fleeing before the north wind obscured the snow-covered summit of Vesuvius and floated down grey ravines to dissipate amid rusty olive-groves. Looking towards Naples she tried to distinguish her home, but the buildings, mounting like steps up the slopes of Monte Echia, appeared flat and identical as stone blocks in a gigantic glacis rising into the battlements of Sant' Elmo. Emma's contemplation was interrupted by a polite voice bidding her good morning. Turning quickly, she faced the Honourable John Rushout, a dilettante who for several years had gravitated between Florence, Rome and Naples.

Emma warmly returned his greeting. "'Tis a pleasure to know we shall have English society in exile, and a friend interested in music. But how we shall perform, God only knows, for I've had to leave my harpsichord. Our things couldn't be got off lest we betrayed the royal family—we were in council and sworn to secrecy. Nearly all the other Ministers will save everything by staying some days longer. Three elegantly furnished houses, all our horses and six or seven carriages left for the vile French!"

"In their progress through Italy the enemy have collected so much booty that one imagine's every house in France must resemble Mr. Christie's rooms," said John Rushout, blinking wisely through his spectacles. "The Roman State has been plundered right, left and centre. Neutrality is not saving the Grand Duke's Duchy from similar depredations, and at this moment the 'Fraternal' touch is applied to King Ferdinando's possessions. Yesterday morning my *vetturino* brought me through Capua only three miles ahead of the French advance guard."

"Good God! By now they must be at Caserta—no wonder the

Princesses of France didn't come aboard last night! 'Tis to be hoped the poor things are not captured. But Mack and all that remains of the army—what can they be doing?"

"Running," Mr. Rushout answered laconically. Lord Northwick's heir was twenty-eight, of cherubic countenance and grave demeanour. He painted and sang in an amateur way and aspired to being a patron of the arts.

Leaning against the bulwark, Emma idly watched boatloads of refugees going from ship to ship in the hope of finding accommodation.

"I'm glad I didn't wait until this morning," Mr. Rushout remarked. "I bribed a fisherman to take me aboard, and as we came near the *Vanguard* I told him to go alongside. Fortunately I arrived with the second embarkation from the palace, and by the time my ruse was discovered, my fisherman had gone! Soon afterwards Lady Knight and her daughter were refused because there was not room for another person."

"Oh dear! But they were to go to the *Rainha de Portugal*!"

"Like myself, I suppose they thought they would first try for the best quarters!"

A *speronara*, flying Papal colours, approached quickly on a following wind until within two cables of the *Vanguard*, when she altered course and drew towards the Portuguese flagship.

"Observe this holy cargo! If I mistake not, the prelate in scarlet is Henry IX of England, better known as Cardinal York."

"Yes, and if you look on t'other side of the Dominican friars, you'll see Cardinal Ruffo and his brothers, Francesco and Peppo Antonio."

"Very unlike an ecclesiastical dignitary!"

"Cardinal Ruffo? He isn't a priest in the ordinary way, and got his title through friendship with the Pope, who placed him among the *chierici di camera* and then advanced him to treasurer-general and war minister. Such favour was good as a fortune, for the Ruffo family are poor, though they own half Calabria."

"He's a handsome ruffian—more like a satellite of Mars than of the Holy See!"

Sir John Acton and Count Esterhazy took the air on the other side of the quarter-deck; Mary Anne walked with them, prinking in her white velvet pelisse and ermine. She was not receiving the attention she considered her due, and her thoughts and her eyes

turned towards John Rushout. Presently she danced across the deck and threw her arm affectionately round Emma's waist.

"Weally, weally, what can we do? 'Tis so plaguely dull—come and play *cock à l'ane*, Lady Hamilton! Pwaps Monsieu' will play too?"

"Go along with you—I shall play no more games till after dinner," Emma returned with good-humoured finality.

"Then Monsieu'? Come and play with me and the Pwincesses—I don't know your name, but you look a vewy nice Englishman. I am Mawy Annel!"

"I am John Rushout."

"The Honouwable John Wushout!" Mary Anne complacently amended.

Emma did not trouble to watch them go towards the royal quarters. Up the gangway of the *Principe Reale* climbed Cardinal York, a picturesque figure in a scarlet cassock, wearing a wide-brimmed white hat on his powdered hair; a mile away King Ferdinando and Sir William could be seen landing fish under the lee of La Favorita; drawing nearer every moment came Lord Nelson in his barge.

To Emma's annoyance, Sir John Acton and Prince Esterhazy reached the gang port first.

"Milord Nelson, I hope you bring a good decision regarding the Neapolitan ships of war?" The Prime Minister's anxiety was not reflected by his wooden countenance.

"In compliance with Their Majesties' wishes, I have directed the Marquis de Niza to equip with jury masts and to man with his own seamen as many Neapolitan ships as time and circumstances permit and to sail them to Messina. But in the event of a French advance near Naples or of an insurrection, the ships are to be immediately destroyed."

"That is indeed a great relief. Such a horrid and unnecessary loss would certainly be detrimental to the King's authority and put heart into the rebels. I go at once to convey the glad news to Her Majesty."

Lord Nelson waited until the Ministers disappeared before expressing his opinion. "My anxiety is not that the ships will be saved, but lest their destruction be delayed too long. As a safeguard I am leaving Captain Hope, but of course he will be under de Niza's orders."

"If the *Alcmene* remains here, how will you do about Kelim Effendi?"

"'Twill only be the matter of a week or so; in that time the Neapolitan ships must either be burnt or saved. There can be no harm in the Grand Signior learning from first hand how we fag in the allied cause."

As the day wore on the passengers became paler and less disposed to amuse themselves. In the late afternoon Emma's sheets and blankets were recovered from the *Samuel and Jane*, which enabled her to mitigate the hardships of emigration. One by one the royal fugitives retired to cots and hammocks. On leaving the state cabin Emma did not descend the quarter-deck ladder to join Sir William, instead she leant upon the rail and looked down. A lantern, standing on the mainmast grating, cast a pale nimbus over the wide deck to blood-red bulwarks and grim 9-pounders run out and secured in position. A marine sentry, in scarlet coat, white breeches and garters, paced back and forth between port and starboard, guarding approaches to the royal quarters. As her eyes grew used to darkness Emma saw clouds scudding before the wind and gleaming black water undulating, swelling and falling back upon itself. A light, rocking at the mast-head, revealed tapering spars and a network of rigging. The air was vibrant with the rush of the north wind and the twang of shivering ropes. Water lapped with soft, sucking sounds against the ship; from the fo'castle floated a lively chorus:

*"One night came down a hurricane,
The sea was mountains rolling,
When Barney Buntline turned his quid,
And said to Billy Bowling.
'A strong nor'-wester's blowing, Bill;
Hark! don't ye hear it roar now?
Lord help 'em! how I pities all
Unhappy folks on shore now!'"*

As the vocalists drew breath for the second verse Emma heard brisk steps on the quarter-deck, and turned with a cry of welcome. "How happy I am to see you, for I thought myself and the men at their duty the only ones up and about in the ship."

"Something told me I should find you here, drinking in this pure air. Lady Hamilton, are you much grieved to be making this voyage?"

Crossing her arms on the rail, Emma looked towards the shore as she considered her answer. "Dear, dear Naples! I love every stone,

even the dust and the smells—I shall remember with happiness each hour I spent there. But though I sorrow to leave it, I look forward to what is coming; 'tis like starting a new life. I feel almost a young maid again, setting out to meet . . .” Emma stopped, biting her full red lip.

“To meet what, My Lady?”

“Oh, I don't know! Adventure, excitement, the silver haze glittering on a spring morn. . . .”

“I understand—the allure of the unknown. All my life it has drawn me on, but now the spell has lost magic. I no longer look into the future, and for me, Lady Hamilton, that is a very strange thing. My old friends, who remember me always laughing and gay, would hardly believe the change; but who can see what I have and be well in health? Kingdoms lost and a royal family in distress; but Their Majesties are pleased to place confidence in me, and while I live and my services can be useful to them, I shall never leave this country, though I know that only the air of England, and peace and quietness, can perfectly restore me.”

“Could not Lady Nelson join us in Palermo?” Emma asked in dulcet tones. “The Queen and I have spoken of it more than once. I told Her Majesty we only wanted Lady Nelson to be the female *tria juncta in uno*, for we all love you, yet all differently and yet equally—if you can make that out. Sir Will'um laughs at us, but he owns women have great souls, at least his has. I would not be a lukewarm friend for the world!”

“You *could* not be, My Lady. I have cause to know the value of your heart. As regards Lady Nelson coming here, it would be impossible. She has already suggested it, I believe on the advice of my good friend Alexander Davison, and I was obliged to discourage her pretty firmly.”

“Why?” Emma innocently inquired.

“If she came I could only strike my flag, for it would be out of the question to set up an establishment in Palermo.”

“Yet many Captains and flag officers takes their wives in their ships—Mrs. Fremantle was in the *Seahorse* when you attacked Santa Cruz.”

“I did not approve—but the Fremantles were just married and much in love.”

Emma sighed, but did not answer. Her cheek rested on her hand; her eyes watched a column of smoke lit by the hidden fires of

Vesuvius. Leaning upon the rail, Lord Nelson gazed at Emma's averted face; from the fo'castle voices sang *pesante*:

*"We know what risk all landsmen run,
From noblemen to tailors;
Then, Bill, let us thank Providence
That you and I are sailors!"*

As the chorus ended Emma heard her name called; she and Lord Nelson looked down, and saw Sir William standing in lantern-light at the bottom of the quarter-deck stairs. "Are ye never coming to bed?" the Minister demanded querulously. "I don't want to fall asleep and then be awakened."

"I'll come now, Sir Will'um," she cried, gathering her cloak around her. "Lud!" she whispered to Lord Nelson, "what it is to be wed!"

He took her proffered hand and kissed it. "Aye, what it is to be wed!"

Despite the hardness of the deck and the uneasy motion of the ship, Emma slept soundly and, to her chagrin, awakened too late to join Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy at breakfast. On repairing to the great cabin she found the royal ladies had been less fortunate.

"I have a headache and fever," the Queen lamented. "My health is always bad, miserable, ruined; my mind is in despair at everything. The Hereditary Princess coughed all night; her infant cries because the *zafatta* declares the motion of the vessel has dried up her milk; and my son Alberto was sick, as you see, all over me and these valances, which I understand were embroidered by Lady Nelson."

"A handkerchief, soaked in cold water, will soon put that to rights," said Emma briskly, setting to work. "As for headaches, you would all feel better for an airing on deck."

"I can't bear the cold wind, Miledi; pity me! pity me! What I suffer I am unable to express. I have renounced my reputation as wife and mother. All that is left for me is to die and to make ready for an eternity for which I long!"

Happily King Ferdinando took a less lugubrious view of his situation. On the previous day, when fishing off Portici, he sent a boatman with instructions to the royal gamekeeper to bring four couples of hunting dogs to the *Vanguard*. The *cacciatore*, a pair of mastiffs and six lurchers arrived soon after breakfast, to the dismay of Captain Hardy, who summarily consigned the dogs to the orlop.

"We shall have plenty of woodcock," Ferdinando assured Sir William; "this wind will bring them in, it is just the season and we shall have rare sport. You must get your *cannone* ready."

A less welcome visitor to the flagship was Marshal Francesco Pignatelli, appointed Vicar-General with authority to act for the King. He brought accounts of further rioting, loss of life and the reappearance of the French cockade. Their Majesties and Ministers held a council in the fore-cabin; at its conclusion the King, General Acton and Prince Castelcicala accompanied the Vicar-General to the entry port and Emma rejoined the Queen. Precariously balanced on a straddling chair, Carolina mopped her eyes:

"I tremble at the atrocities that will be perpetrated by a people who do not defend their country against the enemy, but allow themselves all the horrors of the most unbridled licence. Popular tumults and the slaughter of people are a sure indication of more mischief to come."

Her words were verified even sooner than she expected. As Lord Nelson's guests finished dinner the officer of the watch announced that General Mack had come on board. A few seconds later the General appeared with Sir John Acton. He was haggard and unshaven, his white uniform was torn and mud-stained, and he appeared to be in a desperate state of mind.

"Where is my army?" Ferdinando demanded, with a suspicious look.

"Sire, at Capua I left the remnant, which amounts to little more than twenty-five thousand men." The generalissimo spoke weakly, and eyed the food and wine on the table.

"You haven't dined?" said Lord Nelson, interpreting the glance; "let me offer you something. Allen!" he shouted, "All-e-n! Bring back the roast fowl for General Mack, and the spaghetti—if any is left. In the meantime, General, try this good English porter!"

The Austrian drank deeply, and looked a little better. Glancing across the table to the King and Queen, he spoke emotionally. "My consolation is that Your Majesties are safely on board this proud ship. As I said, hardly twenty-five thousand men remain, and on them I can place little reliance, as every day discloses fresh treachery among the officers, and the behaviour of the men continues to be extremely cowardly."

Lord Nelson watched him narrowly, and, as he finished speaking, grasped the initiative before the King could intervene. "My dear

General, I feel very much for your situation, and were it possible I would not add to Their Majesties' distress by inquiring too closely into the fate of that other army which I helped to transport to Leghorn. There are, or were, thirteen thousand Neapolitan troops in Tuscany. Do you know what has happened to them?"

"French forces have entered Tuscany."

"Then," said Lord Nelson dryly as he rose from the table, "preparations must be made to rescue the Neapolitan force, also the Grand Duke and his family."

Leaving Their Majesties and General Mack to confer in privacy, Lord Nelson, Emma and Sir William repaired to the quarter-deck. The sun had gone in and the wind blew chill, but the decks were comfortably warmed by red-hot cannon balls glowing in sand-filled wash-deck buckets. Groups of distinguished emigrants crowded round the improvised braziers; the only one unattended stood on the poop between the stern-chasers. Lord Nelson led the way up the ladder, a fleet, jaunty figure, with his cloak fluttering like wings from his shoulders. Sir William shivered and held his shapely thin hands over the glowing round-shot.

"Is not this a dream? Can it be real?" Lord Nelson cried to the wind. "Although I could not think the Neapolitans to be a nation of warriors, yet it was not possible to believe that a Kingdom with fifty thousand troops, and good-looking young men, could have been over-run by vastly inferior numbers without anything which could be called a battle. Certainly not a hundred Neapolitans have been killed; but such things are—if I am not dreaming."

"Oh, they are a miserable cowardly lot!" Emma angrily summed up.

"What makes it the more provoking, is that a fine army should yield to a handful of rascals," Sir William amended. "I never yet heard of more than seven thousand French having been collected together, and when His Sicilian Majesty marched on Rome it was certain there were not in all Italy more than twenty-seven thousand enemy troops."

"The most extraordinary thing to me is the conduct of the Emperor. I believe the King and Queen still cherish a hope that the Imperial troops will advance with hasty strides and save Naples. That miracle I don't expect to see!"

Before General Mack went ashore, Lord Nelson and the British Minister were recalled to the cabin for a final consultation. The

generalissimo was insistent that the ship should sail without delay, a wish impatiently echoed by the King and Queen.

"Capua is but three posts from Naples; what is that to the French?" Carolina said in despairing tones. "At this moment they may be stripping the palace at Caserta. *Mon Dieu!* How they will enrich themselves!"

"Did General Mack say anything about the Mesdames of France?" Emma inquired. "I can't bear to think what their fate may be."

"I forgot all about the old ladies," Carolina confessed. "Count Thurn is remaining to help in fitting our warships for sea, and I will ask him to rescue the French Princesses, if it is possible."

The Blue Peter fluttered at the fore; up on the yards seamen moved, sure-footed as flies. Working-parties ran in the guns and housed them for heavy weather by lashing them with their muzzles against the ship's sides; signal flags fluttered to the masthead and were answered by transports and merchant-men in the *Cratere*. As daylight began to fade the fugitives assembled on the quarter-deck and looked towards Naples, mounting in turreted walls from the water. Neapolitan colours flew, as usual, on all the castles; *flambeaux* on the stalls of Santa Lucia made a bracelet of light; faintly on the wind came the mournful *lamento* of the Zampognari.

Queen Carolina and her children were in tears, so were their attendants. In the cold grey light Sir William looked yellow and brittle as an autumn leaf.

"This is indeed a sad moment," he said, biting his underlip. "Happily my studies have made me a philosopher, and I can look without dismay on the perpetual fluctuation of everything."

Before darkness fell about twenty merchant-men could be seen leaving the anchorage in the *Cratere*. Against the dark background of Punta di Posilipo their bellying sails gleamed as they sailed in line ahead to a rendezvous with the warships off Capri. At seven o'clock the *Vanguard* weighed and made sail; she was closely followed by the *Sannite* and the Neapolitan corvette *Archimedes*.

Since the morning the wind had been easterly, but as the vanguard cleared the strait of Minerva it chopped round to the westward in heavy squalls accompanied by rain. Lying on the deck, Emma felt every impact of the seas, which flung her first against the bulkhead and then towards a gun-carriage run in and lashed to ringbolts. Finally she secured her own position by clinging to the same support; Sir William, swinging in his cot, sighed as sleep eluded him. Rain

drummed a tattoo on the quarter-deck overhead; from the adjacent ward-room groans and retching mingled with sounds of straining timbers, the thud and splash of waves and the eerie whistling of the wind. At dawn Emma rose and battled through wind and rain to the great cabin, where she found her mother tending the sick. Court ladies and humble attendants suffered together in common anguish.

"I'm glad you've come, gal," said Mrs. Cadogan. "I was in two minds whether to fetch you, for the Queen and the Princesses are just as bad as this lot in here."

"I'll go in," said Emma, tapping on the door of the after-cabin. No one responded and she pushed it open. "La Santa", with Alberto prone across her knees, sat on the deck with her back to a bulkhead and her feet braced against a chest of drawers. Her face was green, but she did not think of herself:

"Maman is afraid Berto will have a fit, as he had as a baby. He is quiet now, and if I hold him thus his stomach may grow used to *le mouvement de va-et-vient*."

Emma was called away to support the Queen, who declared herself about to expire. "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* Let me go now before I suffer more! Not even the anguish of childbed compares with this! Why doesn't the ship sink and allow us to die?"

As the day passed, the wind grew to a gale and the seas mounted into green billows that appeared higher than the masts. Pandemonium reigned, lamentations and prayers mingled with the roar of the tempest. Ladies-in-waiting, nurses and servants were incapable of helping the Queen and her family; below in the ward-room the situation was even worse, as the smell of paint augmented the torments of seasickness. In the early afternoon Sir William, after trying to make himself heard, opened the door of the fore-cabin and beckoned to Emma.

"Will you ask your mother to come down? The stench below beggars description—and the noise! Those who are not retching are on their knees calling upon La Madonna and San Gennaro, while I, more silently, invoke the goddess Hygeia."

Mrs. Cadogan was extremely flattered to learn that the message came from His Majesty.

"Two of us are not needed up here," she assured Emma. "Make Giulia help you—a lumping girl like that apeing the tender ways of gentry!"

"My God, look at her! A lot of use Giulia will be!"

"Somehow you must manage—the King and me have always been friends, and if he calls his old *Ruffiana* he shall have her!"

Eighteen seasick women, two children and an infant to tend, left Emma no time to heed the storm until the rolling of the ship compelled her to move on her knees across the cabins. Mattresses slid back and forth, Princess Castelvicala was flung against a sideboard and cut her head. In the after-cabin the royal ladies sat shrieking in their oblong canvas cots, which, slung from the beams, collided like swing-boats at a fair. At one moment the *Vanguard* quivered in the crest of a mountainous wave, with her sternlights commanding a desolate vista of tumbling green sea, at the next she plunged to the bottom of a ribbed and shiny gully that, before she could rise again, flung a white spate over the stern-galleries and against the leaded panes. The wind roared, the sky darkened to pewter. Suddenly a dazzling flash of lightning zigzagged to meet the horizon; thunder cracked and rumbled overhead; hail-stones rattled on the decks. A furious blast of wind from W.S.W. struck the *Vanguard* on the starboard beam; she flinched and quivered, as, with rending sounds, the three top-sails split, followed, a few seconds later, by the driver. The thudding of bare feet scampering across the poop was drowned by screams of the royal ladies and their women. In a moment confusion was augmented by the arrival of the King, Prince Francesco, and all the courtiers and attendants from the ward-room.

"We have been struck!" His Majesty's falsetto rose shrilly above a deep rumble of thunder, "sailors are bringing up axes to cut away the masts. We have escaped a little danger on dry land only to perish in cold water. *Ma femme*, why did I listen to you? Why did I not trust to the valour of my *lazzaroni*?"

"If the end is near, I meet it with fortitude!" Carolina shouted. "I leave this base world with pleasure; only, as a mother, I grieve for my children, who might have enjoyed happiness!"

Mary Anne Acton flung herself into her uncle's arms and sobbed against his shoulder, but for the majority seasickness robbed death of poignancy. Count Esterhazy alone seemed acutely apprehensive of the punishment awaiting those who die in sin. Sinking on his knees before the King's confessor, the Imperial Minister hastily laid bare his soul, but Don Giuseppe Garano cut him short with a muttered absolution, and moved away, leaving the Count shriven but still uneasy in conscience.

Suffering neither from seasickness nor alarm, Emma watched him fingering his beautiful snuff-box, torn between a desire to keep a valuable memento of his mistress and the more prudent course of gaining indulgence by sacrifice. A flicker of blue electric light and a deafening crash of thunder decided the question. Leaping to his feet, Count Esterhazy dashed out of the great cabin, closely pursued by Emma, who reached the door of the coach in time to see the costly *bibelot* hurtling into the water. Lightning playing across the sky flickered over the Count's tall garish figure and red hair flying out on the wind. Standing on tangled ropes, axes and torn canvas, he was buffeted and thrust aside by seamen pulling on the brails that hauled in the driver. Emma's glance slid past him to Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy, leaning against the quarter-deck rail as they looked aloft. Men lay out on the top-sail yards, clinging as best they might, grasping, when they could, tattered rags of canvas beating in the fierce wind. Raising a silver speaking-trumpet to his lips, Captain Hardy shouted an order; Lord Nelson swung into an upright position, and in so doing caught sight of the Imperial Minister. In a moment the Admiral leapt every obstacle and touched the Count on the arm.

"Sir, what do you do here? You are in some danger, and impede my men going about their duty—I must ask you to return to your quarters."

"I too came upon this deck to perform a duty—the duty of every Christian to disavow all venality when facing eternity. I have just thrown my beautiful snuff-box into the water, that perfect picture of *ma belle amie* as Venus!"

"Having made that sacrifice, I pray you not to offer yourself as another. Allow me to guide you over this fallen rigging, which is somewhat dangerous." Taking Count Esterhazy by arm, Lord Nelson pushed him into the coach, and came face to face with Emma. "My Lady, you should not be here either!"

"I wanted to see what had happened—the King rushed up from below declaring the ship was sinking."

"For a moment we were in the devil of a scrape, but we shall get all in order presently and new sails bent. Esterhazy is a queer fellow," Lord Nelson remarked when the Austrian Minister had disappeared, "but the drowning of *Lais* seems to have worked a miracle, for the storm is certainly abating. How is the great Queen? Does she feel uneasiness?"

"She's as brave as a lion," Emma lied.

"Never did I meet the equal of your Ladyship and Her Majesty! Now, to ease my mind, go back!"

Hastily kissing her hand, he returned to the quarter-deck; when he had passed out into the storm, Emma realized that they had shouted at the top of their voices, yet had hardly heard each other for the roar of the wind.

Before returning to her ministrations, Emma went in search of her mother and Sir William, but the disordered ward-room was empty. Alarm gripped her heart. Suppose they were both swept overboard? . . . Suppose she never saw them again? . . . Good God! At this moment Emma Hamilton might be an orphan and a widow! . . .

With a wild intention of searching the ship, she turned about in time to see her mother stumbling and lurching up the ladder from the gun-deck.

"Where have you been?" Emma demanded in natural irritation. "I thought you must be washed overboard!"

"Don't be so foolish, gall! Me and Mr. Rushout were enjoying a bite and sup in the gun-room. We was faint for lack of something inside us, and when I told Will'um Faddy, who is our doggie, he said he'd get us a bit of cheese and a drop of grog below."

Emma was swept by gratitude for a reprieve. Throwing her arms round Mrs. Cadogan, she gave her a hug and a kiss. "Oh, Mam, Mam, suppose you had been drowned!"

"Get along with you! Sometimes you act senseless as a little maid!"

"I don't care if you laugh, so you're safe! Where's Sir Will'um?"

"In his cot, I expect. There! Leave go, gall! While my gentlemen are with the Queen I'm going to swab the ward-room!"

Emma turned towards her cabin and tried to open the door, but it only yielded a few inches. Poking her head through the gap, she saw that the obstruction was her mattress, and Sir William sat upon it with a pistol clasped in either hand.

"Good God, Sir Will'um, whatever are you doing?"

"Merely taking precautions, my dear! When I feel the ship sinking I shall shoot myself—I am determined not to die with the guggle, guggle, guggle of water in my throat."

"We're not going to the bottom, Sir Will'um! Lord Nelson is on deck, and he told me new sails would soon be up—the wind is far less than it was half an hour ago and the thunder has passed. Can't you feel the difference?"

"I believe you're right, but I shall hold on to my pistols for the present."

As dusk fell the *Vanguard* was again under easy sail and running strongly on a S.E. wind; the sea had gone down, but to the suffering passengers it seemed turbulent as before. Emma and Mrs. Cadogan decided to remain at their posts; a lady-in-waiting made room on her mattress, but Emma found it more comfortable to sit in Lord Nelson's arm-chair and rest her head on the table. There was little sleep for anyone. As the ship rolled with a slow, steady motion, so the four muskets from the *San Josef* clattered back and forth behind the batten that held them against the bulk-head; shrill squeaks came from a hook and ring as a candle swung in an iron lantern; the infant Princess screamed with hunger, her *zafatta* retched with dramatic abandon.

Christmas morning dawned at last. As the sun rose, Savari Salvante erected an altar in the coach; half an hour later the royal family and their retinue attended Mass, celebrated by Don Garano and l'abbé Labdane.

Emma took the opportunity to escape on deck. A cold bright morning succeeded the rough night. White horses raced on the crests of sapphire-blue waves; cumulus clouds, like galleons under a press of sail, sped across an azure sky. The *Vanguard* was within sight of the Sicilian coast; thirty miles to windward the Liparean Isles of Alicudi and Felicudi rose comically out of the water, on the other quarter the small, low island of Ustica was so close that its church bell could be heard and seen as it swung in a red-tiled campanile. Far astern, but overhauling the *Vanguard* with a soldier's wind, the *Sannite* made a grand spectacle, sailing under top-sails and courses.

Emma had not been long on deck before she was joined by Lord Nelson. "Lady Hamilton, I wish you the compliments of the season; how glad I should be to say 'A happy Christmas'. But that would be a mockery when you are leaving your houses and your treasures to be plundered by the enemies of Christ."

"Yet I am happy. I know it is wrong to be so when the Queen is heartbroken and Sir Will'um is having all he can do to be a philosopher."

Lord Nelson looked pale and worn; frequently he put his hand to his head as though in pain.

Emma regarded him compassionately. "Does the wound hurt again?"

"It is but so so, and I have been very seasick. Nothing cures me, though I can go on and even fight a battle feeling so ill that a landsman would be unable to rise from his crib."

"If only you had come to me! I would have bathed your head and given you something settling. It would have been a pleasure to cosset you!"

"I know—and as I lay awake I thought of your cool hands on my brow."

"Then, my dear Lord, why did you not come?"

The Admiral sighed and looked away. "I could not."

After Mass, Emma rejoined the royal family, who were so much restored that they talked eagerly of breakfast about to be served in the great cabin.

Alberto, the Queen's six-year-old son, rushed to embrace Emma.

"Miledi, our cook, Lombardo, is giving us *capitone* and honey cakes. I shall eat and eat until I burst!"

Prince Leopold jeered. "You would die, Alberto, and be carried away in a coffin."

"Then I shall eat, but not burst," Alberto asserted.

Everyone felt better, everyone tried to be merry on the Saviour's *festa*, but the King, Emma and the Princes alone could boast of appetites. Alberto ate so heartily that his face grew pink and his nurse had to unbutton his little waistcoat before he could accommodate the last cake on the dish.

"*Molto bene!*" cried His Majesty, "you will grow into a big man like your father, if you do not get a belly-ache."

"Give me the macaroni and I will finish that too!" Alberto replied.

After breakfast the ladies walked on the quarter-deck, and the gentlemen were conducted by Captain Hardy and Lieutenant Swiney to see the magazine. Emma was permitted to go as far as the light-room in the orlop, a narrow, tin-lined aperture shaped like a shrine, with a transenna guarding candles instead of an image.

Sir William was greatly impressed. "By taking such thorough precautions, an accident to the magazine would seem impossible!"

"Yet many ships blow up," Captain Hardy replied.

To Emma's chagrin, Sir William would not allow her to make the final descent to the magazine. As an alternative, Lieutenant Swiney, who was much in love, urged her to walk with him round the ship while the people were at quarters; thus half an hour elapsed before Emma got back to the great cabin. She returned to a scene of con-

fusion, hysterics and prayers. Alberto, blue in the face, with rolling eyes and twitching limbs, lay on the deck while Mr. Jefferson, surgeon of the *Vanguard*, and Mrs. Cadogan tried to force a teaspoon between his champing jaws.

"Miledi, look at my poor sacrificed innocent!" Carolina screamed, pointing a shaking finger at her son. "*Santa Maria! La Madre di Dio*, am I to lose all my children?"

The King and his surgeon, Sir William, Lord Nelson and Sir John Acton arrived post haste; whereupon the small Prince was blooded and blistered. Restored to some sensibility by these measures, he was given a tartar emetic, which left him pale and limp, but in possession of his wits. They put him to bed, but he cried for Emma to take him on her lap. All day long she nursed him sitting in Lord Nelson's arm-chair drawn close to the stern-lights, so that Alberto could see the white horses on the tops of the waves. Rocking him against her bosom, she sang the haunting lullabies of Naples, thence she passed to the Christmas pastorate:

*"E nasciuto il Re del Cielo,
Che nel candido suo velo
Sulla terra calerà."*

Darkness fell, and a candle was lit in the lantern that swung from a hook in one of the beams. Lord Nelson came in to tell the Queen that he expected to reach Palermo in the early hours of the morning.

"Thank God! Since the afternoon the sea has become so rough that we are all ill again. We shall never be able to repay Miledi for all she has done for us."

"'Tis nothing—it has been a pleasure!" Emma declared. "I do believe Alberto has fallen asleep at last; he's been quite still these ten minutes. If I am careful I believe I can put him in his crib without waking him."

Rising cautiously, she walked from darkness into the beam from the candle. As the light fell on the child's face, Emma stifled a scream and beckoned to Lord Nelson. A glance sufficed.

"Dead!" he whispered.

Queen Carolina was inconsolable. "Four months ago Elisabetta, and now her brother! My two youngest almost at a blow! It is cruel, cruel! Why do my children die? Why should I, who have borne sixteen, have only seven left?"

At two o'clock in the morning the *Vanguard* anchored inside

Palermo mole; and an hour later the ship was moored to the shore by a cable carried through the gun-room port. Shortly afterwards His Sicilian Majesty's royal standard was hoisted at the main-topgallant-mast head, and the Viceroy, the Archbishop and the principal nobles came on board. The Queen was too upset to appear; as the stars began to fade she landed unobtrusively near Porta Felice, and, supported by Emma and the Princesses, drove to the old palace on the farther side of the city.



CHAPTER TWENTY

AFTER spending a couple of days as guests of the King and Queen, Sir William, Emma and Mrs. Cadogan took up their abode in a villa overlooking the public gardens of Flora Reale. The gardens lay on the eastern side of Palermo, and were connected with the mole and harbour by a wide road and promenade that ran along the shore from Porta Felice.

Palermo, like Naples, was dominated by a mountain, but no fiery demon poured red-hot lava upon the people in the old walled city. The presiding genius of Monte Pellegrino was gentle Santa Rosalia, whose bones, brought down from the shrine on the summit, had twice stopped the plague when it ravaged the people. Detached from all other mountains, the barren limestone rock rose sharply from the sea on the north side of the harbour. It was neither precipitous nor of great height, but to facilitate the approach to the grotto the senate of Palermo had levied a tax on meat, and with the money a path had been hewn. The scar marking its zigzag course and the white tower of the convent on the mountain-top were the most assertive features of the view facing Villa Bastioni.

The villa lent by the King to Sir William was of Saracenic design; arcades of horse-shoe arches enclosed the upper floor; a pointed parapet edged the flat roof. Timber ceilings were joined to walls by stalactite vaulting, rooms were embellished with geometrical patterns carved in plaster, mosaics of coloured marble and chips of looking-glass. Arches connected one apartment with another. Black-and-white tiled flooring extended in uniform checker-work; every vista offered sanctuary from blazing sun and torrid winds. But it was not summer, and the first snow seen in Palermo for thirty years crowned Monte Pellegrino and lay upon roofs in the plain. Fatigue, worry, vicissitudes on sea, and lastly the arctic chill of a southern villa long

untenanted, brought on a sharp attack of Sir William's old enemy, bilious fever.

"To exchange the comforts of Palazzo Sessa for a house without chimneys and calculated only for summer is injurious for us all," he said, sitting up in bed to sip a bowl of ass's milk brought by Mrs. Cadogan. "But as I wax old it is especially hard upon me, having both bilious and rheumatic complaints."

"The Queen suffers too," Emma remarked. "She has just wrote saying: 'I am in despair. I have been bled, but my head and chest are very bad and I am good for nothing.' She goes on to ask how we like the villa."

"Courtesy will forbid my telling her!"

Later in the day Lord Nelson visited the invalid, and was conducted by Emma to the bedroom, rendered habitable by two braziers constantly replenished by Gaetano. The Admiral, looking feverish and ill, followed his habit when out of humour of pacing up and down.

"Tell us what provokes ye," said Sir William, "for by now Emma and I know something is amiss when ye walk the quarter-deck."

"What a blessing it is to be understood! I'll tell you in a few words: the Cabinet have appointed Captain Sir Sidney Smith to command in the Levant Seas, an appointment which seems designed to make him a joint Minister with his brother, Spencer Smith, at the Ottoman Port. Lest I should be under any misapprehension regarding his position, the Swedish Knight sends me various inclosures dispatched when his 80-gun ship, *Le Tigre*, was off Malta."

"I have also been honoured by the pen of Sir Sidney—four folio pages, no less."

"*I do feel it, for I am a man*, that it is impossible for me to serve in these seas with the squadron under a junior officer. Could I have thought it!—and from Earl Spencer! Never, never was I so astonished. But the Swedish Knight shall not steal the triumph from my brave friends who so gloriously fought at the Battle of the Nile. As soon as I can get hold of Troubridge I shall send him to Egypt to endeavour to destroy the ships in Alexandria—if it can be done, he will do it."

"But is it possible that any man could be base enough to put himself ahead of any one of the heroes of the Nile?" Emma inquired with warm indignation.

"Aye, 'tis true enough!" Taking a packet of papers from his

pocket, Lord Nelson dropped them on the foot of Sir William's bed in order that he could unfold them with his single hand. "Captain Smith sends me this extract from Lord Grenville's letter to John Spencer Smith, which makes the Knight's position, and that of my gallant friends, quite clear. The First Lord writes:

"His Majesty has been graciously pleased to direct that your brother, Sir Sidney Smith, shall proceed to Constantinople, with the 80-gun ship, *Le Tigre*. His instructions will enable him to take the command of such of His Majesty's ships as he may find in those seas, unless, by any unforeseen accident, it should happen that there should be among them any of His Majesty's officers of superior rank, and he will be directed to act with such a force, in conjunction with the Russian and Ottoman squadrons, for the defence of the Ottoman Empire, and for the annoyance of the enemy in that quarter."

This leaves no doubt what the position is and defines my place in the district which I had thought under my command."

"Now I'll read ye an extract from my *billet*," said Sir William, fishing under his pillow; "'tis from Sir Sidney Smith, and I fear will warm ye, as it did me:

"I hope to be off Alexandria time enough to burn a little of the *Tigre's* powder, in conjunction with my friend the *zealous* Hood, who naturally falls under my orders when we meet as being my junior, and you no doubt see the policy which dictated the measure of annexing diplomatic rank to the naval officer who will have to act in concert with the Russians and Turks, and likewise the delicacy of not superceding my brother, by annexing a stranger to him in that situation after all he has done towards bringing matters to their present favourable crisis."

"Is it to be borne?" Lord Nelson cried. With light steps he walked furiously up and down. "The Knight forgets the respect due to his superior officer, he has no orders from Lord St. Vincent to take my ships away from my command—but it is all of a piece!"

"I would give up the command before I'd submit to play second fiddle to an upstart," Emma asserted. "My God, how dare he insult the great and glorious Nelson! I wish I had Sir Sidney here, I'd punish him for his effrontery, so I would!"

"I think ye both overrate the officer's importance," Sir William chuckled. "His father, Captain John Smith of the Guards, was one of the Gentlemen Ushers to Queen Charlotte; thus I remember Sidney from his birth, some thirty-four years ago. I don't deprecate the courage he has often shown, but he detracts from his reputation by love of self-advertisement and indifference as to whether he advances through merit or his father's interest at Court. Certainly he did not increase his prestige by contriving that our Gracious Majesty should formally invest him at St. James's with the insignia of a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Sword, thus ratifying his claim to the Knighthood conferred by King Gustavus for war services under the Swedish flag undertaken without authority from England. In short, Sidney Smith prefers notoriety to the uncertain prospect of fame—through duty."

Lord Nelson paid no attention to Sir William's digression. "I shall write to Earl Spencer and request permission to return to England—I need a little of that ease and quiet I have so long been a stranger to."

"My dear Nelson, if you go home, I hope you will take Emma and myself. I, too, feel worn out, having had for six years past the whole load of business on my hands, and am most desirous of profiting by the King's leave."

"In writing to Lord St. Vincent I shall certainly ask permission to carry my dear friends with me."

Sir William's bilious attack was severe, but of short duration; after three days in bed he regained his feet. His legs proved tremulous, but his spirit was stout. "I feel age creeping upon me, but I will bear up as long and as well as I can, and not give up as my father did twenty years before he died, calling himself a dying man—and so are we all."

Of the large fleet which set out with the *Vanguard*, only the *Sannite*, a transport and a Greek *polacca* reached Palermo in the old year; it was presumed that the rest of the convoy had taken refuge from the storm at Messina. On New Year's Day the storeship *Alliance* arrived from Naples, bringing Count Thurn with dispatches for the King, and, to the surprise and relief of all their friends, Lady Knight and Cornelia. The dowager was suffering from the effects of exposure in an open boat on the night of embarkation.

"We were four hours on the water before we were accommodated in the *Rainha*," Cornelia told Emma. "Commander Stone was by no means pleased to receive two more helpless passengers in his crowded ship, and we spent a wretched night—only a Russian lady of high

rank had a bed to sleep in. Mama was really ill, and I grew seriously concerned, having little or no confidence in the Portuguese. You can imagine how thankful I was when Captain Wilmot came in from a cruise and invited us that same evening to go on board. Mama, however, declined the offer from motives of delicacy towards Lord Nelson, who had arranged for our going in the Portuguese man-of-war."

"My God! I wouldn't have gone to that length!" Emma ejaculated. "But, then, I'm not a lady born, and put comfort and safety before good manners."

"Neither am I gifted with my mother's fortitude. I passed the night in misery, anticipating every possible misfortune, until at length she took compassion on my nervous feelings and consented to change, if the *Alliance* should not have sailed before morning."

To Emma's chagrin, she was unable to offer her friends hospitality at Villa Bastioni. There were no beds to spare, and cooking arrangements were of nomadic simplicity. Lady Knight and her daughter were obliged to go to the only hotel, a miserable place facing, across a narrow street, the principal jail of the town. Groans, howls and lamentations floating through the grated windows made the French landlady's terms of five ducats a day seem even more excessive than they at first appeared.

Critical discontent prevailed among refugees accustomed to the luxury of a capital city: the only cheerful exile was King Ferdinando, whose first edict in his southern kingdom defined the forest of Pantano di Mundello as a royal *chasse*. The *bandita reale* covered a wide area, and anyone daring to hunt or shoot within it was promised severe punishment. Public notices to this effect appeared on walls and plinths of statues; also a list of penalties that would fall on ladies wearing their hair cropped *à la Bruto*, or adorned with wigs of similar pattern.

"He does not care what happens if he can demolish innocent animals," Carolina querulously remarked. "No attention is given to Neapolitan affairs, which are precarious. The latest news, Miledi, makes me doubt the loyalty of Marshal Pignatelli, who laughed and applauded an infamous ballet at San Carlo representing our departure, and that of the English, from Naples. As our Vicario-Generale, it was his duty to put an immediate stop to such an exhibition; that Pignatelli did not do so fills me with foreboding. But the King remains unconcerned—I am neither consulted nor even listened to, and

am excessively unhappy. A quiet conversation with our inestimable liberator about the defence of this island would ease my mind, for everything I see, hear, and understand, deprives me of all tranquillity."

"Lord Nelson shall come," Emma promised. "But he is so deeply engaged that we see little of him. He is determined to bring matters to an issue both at Alexandria and Malta; Captain Troubridge is to make a vigorous attack on the shipping in the former place, and 'tis hoped Malta will soon surrender to Captain Ball. With those two places settled, Nelson declares he will be quite at ease respecting the sea."

"I wish such confidence could be felt on shore. How I regret I did not go elsewhere with my children, and shelter myself with my family from events which must inevitably occur from the line of conduct pursued; but one must submit to fate or die."

The next accounts from Naples realized the Queen's fears. General Mack, endeavouring to gain time, sued for an armistice, but the French Commander refused to treat with any but the people of Naples. Acting on his own initiative, and the advice of the Neapolitan nobility, Marshal Pignatelli was more successful. Sending the Principe di Milano and the Duca di Gesso as his representatives to the enemy camp at Caiazzo, he procured an armistice signed by General Championnet. On the 12th of January the Vicar-General reported his negotiations, and appeared to think his achievement merited reward. The conditions agreed to threw the Court into the utmost consternation: King Ferdinando and General Acton were as much perturbed as Her Majesty. A council was held, attended by Lord Nelson and Sir William.

"I expected a general rising in defence of the capital of my kingdom," Ferdinando shouted, his face mottled with anger. "Instead my Vicario-Generale sells my realm to the enemy in exchange for a two months' armistice. Pignatelli agrees to pay two and a half million Neapolitan ducats before the 18th of this month, besides ceding immediately to the French army my fortress of Capua, and all the country from Gaeta on the Mediterranean to Manfredonia on the Adriatic. In addition, he signs away my richly fertile lands of Foggia in Puglia, from whence Naples derives her principal supplies of corn and cattle. It is obvious that these concessions must lead to the irretrievable loss of my whole dominion."

"Pignatelli had instructions to defend the kingdom to the last stone in Calabria," General Acton affirmed.

"Either he forgot he has a master, or remembered it only to impose on him the most disgraceful terms."

Lord Nelson, who had been walking up and down, came to a full stop in front of the King. "Sire, I will go myself into the Bay of Naples and endeavour to retrieve the position before all is quite lost."

"Leaving us unprotected? At the mercy of these islanders, who are as untrustworthy as the Neapolitans? I am grateful to you, Milord, but I would rather lose Naples than my life!"

While Lord Nelson and Sir William conferred with Ferdinando and his chief Minister, Emma was closeted with the Queen. The *triumphal* *juncta in uno* left the palace together and drove down Il Cassaro, a long, straight road running from the south gate near Palazzo Reale to Porta Felice, the triumphal arch opening upon the Marina at the point where the promenade ended and the mole began. Il Cassaro and La Nova divided the walled city into four equal parts; the remaining streets, narrow, crooked and unpaved, were buried in mud during winter and frequently became rapid torrents that could only be traversed by movable wooden bridges. The two thoroughfares crossed at a small octagon created, by civic pride, to resemble a sculptor's yard. In the *Ottangolo* statues stood in due gradation; foremost were symbolical figures of the seasons, so short in their proportions that they resembled busts. Just behind came life-sized effigies of Spanish monarchs, and over them crude heads of saints.

Sir William suffered every time he went to the palace. "I could well dispense with this abundance of decoration," he murmured. "The fountains are the most tolerable, as they serve a useful purpose, but nearly all monuments in Palermo hurt the eye. Scarcely any have been erected in the reign of good taste."

Neither Emma nor Lord Nelson paid attention. "When I was with the Queen," said Emma, "she told me that the Spanish *Chargé d'Affaires* at Naples is actively negotiating to make the Duke of Parma's son King of Naples under French protection. She says there is no doubt, and as Don Boulogny is the schemer, I can believe it, for a greater wretch doesn't exist."

"Nothing can surprise me," Nelson replied. "The nobles mean to exclude the King, and the French long to give them the fraternal squeeze, but I question any intention of relinquishing gains to partners in Spain. How it will end, God only knows; but I shall, as is my duty, do everything in the best manner I am able, for the honour of our country. It is no small consolation that I have received from

Lord St. Vincent instructions from our Government rendering my position absolutely clear. I am directed to give cordial and unlimited support to our allies and to regard the protection of the coasts of Sicily, Naples and the Adriatic as the objects to which a principal part of the squadron must be employed."

"And you are actively pushing on with the blockades of Malta and Alexandria; in short, my dear Nelson, you are doing everything that can be done. It seems as if Great Britain alone dared to look the proud and perfidious enemy in the face."

"Aye; perfidious indeed! Troubridge, before he left on the 7th, showed me a copy of the *Directeur* for the 25th of September giving Briot's speech to the Council of Five Hundred. I felt so much angered that every word burnt on my memory:

"'The valour of the English, which so many poor creatures take delight to celebrate, consists in nothing else than overpowering their enemies by superiority of numbers. Nelson, reinforced by every traitor, after adding to his squadron, squadrons still more numerous, attacked the French on board their ships lying at anchor in an open road. The British, emboldened by a stupid superiority, could be no other than successful. . . . To burn ships is a kind of puny trick, which bespeaks weakness: it was but a hypocritical victory.' And the *Chef du Cabinet* remarked: 'Admiral Nelson would not easily justify his conduct.'"

"What liars!" cried Emma, her eyes flashing and her colour mounting. "How can any believe such a tale when the world knows that at the glorious Battle of the Nile your whole squadron was thirteen 74's and a 50-gun ship—and one, the *Culloden*, out of action. Whereas the enemy's strength was three 80's, nine 74's, four frigates, and the gigantic *L'Orient*."

"*Such things are!*" Lord Nelson's glance lingered on her vivid face. "Lady Hamilton, how you remember!"

"Brueys' ships mounted 1178 guns, and he had a battery on shore to support the head of his line," said Sir William. "You, my dear Nelson, had 1012 guns, and were vastly inferior in tonnage. I say, without fear of contradiction, that the Battle of the Nile was the most splendid and glorious success ever gained by the British Navy. You shattered Buonaparte's grandiose schemes, saved the Ottoman Empire, and possibly India, from becoming the prey of France."

Throughout the night of January the 15th, King Ferdinando and his Ministers sat in Council; with the dawn they reached a unanimous decision to degrade Marshal Pignatelli, disavow all he had done, and appoint in his stead General Mack. Before the orders reached Naples the populace had risen against the Regent and nobles, accusing them of betraying their Sovereign by effecting an armistice without consent of the people. The mob forced their way into the arsenal and the castles of Sant' Elmo, dell' Uovo and the Carmine; they hoisted the King's flag on every fortress, and when General Championnet's commissaries arrived to collect the indemnity, *lazzaroni* drove them from the city. Their Majesties' satisfaction at this exhibition of loyalty was countered by chagrin at the loss of their marine. The Portuguese, they contended, had burnt Neapolitan ships of war before circumstances required such a measure. The matter was in dispute when an Imperial vessel arrived at Palermo, bringing Marshal Pignatelli, fleeing from the wrath of the Neapolitans. The late Vicario-Generale was not suffered to disembark, and while arrangements were made to send him to the castle at Girgenti, he was interrogated by one of the King's secret agents. Emma received a hasty scribbled account from the Queen:

"I am more dead than alive. The reports made to Luigi by Pignatelli, the attitude taken by this vile nobility prove that the revolution is completed. The people have joined with the constituted authority, they have disarmed the infamous troops, the castle, arsenal, &c; Mack has disappeared; Salandra, with two thousand five hundred men, says he can do nothing the troops give up their arms to the people. . . ."

Sir William, returning a few minutes later from a visit to the *Vanguard*, was able to throw more light upon the communication. "It appears that Pignatelli was driven out of the city by the infuriated mob, who have chosen Prince Moliterno and the Duca di Roccaromana as 'Generale of the People'. Mack has vanished, leaving the Duca della Salandra to command the poor remains of the fine Neapolitan army reduced to two thousand five hundred discontented men, without provisions, forage or money. At Naples not a trace of a soldier is left, all having sold or given up their arms to the people."

"The Queen says she wants Nelson, you and me, to go to the palace between eleven and twelve."

Sir William glanced at the clock and rose. "Then we must hasten, put on your hat and I'll call a *calisso*."

In winter everyone in Palermo drove in hired carriages drawn by mules; only in summer and on festivals did private coaches make an appearance.

With the aid of leather straps, Emma and Sir William pulled themselves up into an antique vehicle driven by a *vetturino* perched behind the calash. Urged by a long whip, the mules trotted lethargically along a wide road skirting the city wall and separated from the sea by a handsome promenade planted with trees and adorned with statues of the Kings of Sicily. The wall had been lowered and beautified with balustrades, through which palaces and gardens could be seen.

"I met the Duca di Girgenti this morning," said Sir William, "and he offered me on very favourable terms the town house of his mad kinsman, Prince de Palagonia. If I had the means I would accept the offer, for I clearly see that my waning flame will be extinguished by a long sojourn in the King's cold villa."

"We can't go on as we are, that's certain! Every day more British come from Naples, and all expect to be entertained. Yet how can we keep a table when we've only a charcoal-basket to cook upon?"

"I believe Lord Nelson would not be averse to sharing a house and expenses while we all remain in this place. He told me this morning he is heartily tired of his cramped quarters, His Majesty never having relinquished the great cabin which he uses as a kind of floating office of state. It has put Nelson into an awkward position, and I think he means to break it by sending the *Vanguard* to Malta when the *Bellerophon* arrives with the convoy."

Joyous excitement sounded in Emma's voice. "Then let's arrange it so; propose the plan, Nelson is too diffident to suggest it. Under our roof we could build him up again, for he looks almost as ill as he was after the Nile."

"Unless I can borrow from His Lordship, the project cannot be put into effect, for my debts mount up alarmingly. Smith's last packet inclosed bills totalling four hundred and twenty seven pounds—but that won't finish the matter. Taxes and dues will be exacted, though our houses be plundered and occupied by the French."

Ordering the *vetturino* to wait near Porta Felice, Emma and Sir William skirted the arsenal and gained the mole, a long pier that struck out into the sea in an easterly direction before turning to the

north, thereby enclosing a harbour sufficiently wide and deep to accommodate a considerable fleet. The *Vanguard*, *Principe Reale* and *Sannite* were moored with hawsers to the mole; *São Affonso* lay at anchor under the picturesque walls of the old castle on the opposite side of the harbour. The British flagship occupied the outer berth, close to the lighthouse and two batteries of cannon on the end of the mole; King Ferdinando's standard fluttered at the main and Lord Nelson's blue flag at the mizzen. Sir William would not go on board, instead he scribbled a note on his tablets and gave it to a seaman from the *Vanguard* waiting in a dinghy to ferry visitors across the strip of water.

"Being the most considerate of men, Nelson will come immediately," Sir William prophesied. "And I gave him a hint that the Queen desires a private talk with us before His Majesty returns from Monreale."

They turned and retraced their steps towards Palermo and the encircling mountains. Slender turrets, like minarets, and cupolas painted a dull red uprose beside white campanili crowned with the cross and roofed with ancient tiles. From Flora Reale to Porta Felice the beach was fringed with thick groves pierced by the white gleam of palaces and statuary. *La Marina* ended at Porta Felice, and the fishermen's quarters began. Tenements tall as the *fondachi* of Santa Lucia followed the deep curve of the old port to the escarpments of the castle guarding the eastern approach.

On drawing level with the *Sannite*, Sir William paused to look at the ship. The Neapolitan 74 had an air of dirt and neglect; sailors lay asleep on the decks or employed themselves searching for lice; a couple of lieutenants, lolling *en déshabillé* against the quarter-deck rail, chewed lupin seeds and spat the husks into the waist.

"What a contrast!" said Sir William. "The *Vanguard* is all cleanliness and order, while this ship is kept like a Barbary corsair."

Emma's response was perfunctory, her quick ears heard Lord Nelson's brisk steps on the mole. Saluting and smiling, the Admiral placed himself between his friends. "I've not kept you waiting, have I? But what fresh misfortune can require our counsels? If 'tis the state of this island, I can put it in a nutshell. *Hate the French; love the English. Discontent with their present government*, as Neapolitan advisers take the lead to the entire exclusion of the Sicilians."

"Many mistakes occur," Sir William agreed. "Ferdinando has

caused much offence by making royal preserves of forests hitherto regarded as public property."

"And he arouses still greater anger by taking work from Sicilians in order to give employment to his favourites," Emma continued. "The Queen sees how mistaken this is, but her advice isn't heeded. Would you believe it? The King wants to put John Græffer in charge of Flora Reale and the Marina gardens in place of Fra Dragonetti whose pride they are."

Sir William laughed. "His Majesty would seize any means to quieten Carry Græffer's importunities—she won't allow him to forget his responsibilities!"

"The King should be careful," Lord Nelson replied. "The Sicilians are proud beyond any I have ever seen; and, in fairness, I think they ought to be consulted in the defence of their own country. They may not have the experience of the others, but they cannot act worse than the *foreigners* have done."

Crossing from the mole to Porta Felice, the trio came face to face with the Brigadiere Caracciolo as he emerged through the archway. Sir William prepared to stop, but the Neapolitan Commadore bowed coldly and passed on.

"Upon my soul! How very extraordinary!"

"That is because you are with me," Lord Nelson explained. "Caracciolo does not forgive me for embarking Their Majesties under the British flag, and revenges himself by publicly pronouncing himself my superior on the grounds that the *Vanguard's* sails were split in the storm and the *Sannite* reached Palermo undamaged. He forgets to mention that I deprived myself of part of my crew in order to man his ship. But never mind!"

A drive of ten minutes in the ramshackle *vettura* brought them to the Piazza Filippo, a large square formed by several extensive monasteries and the palaces of the King and the Archbishop. In the centre a marble statue of Philip V stood on a pedestal so richly ornamented with allegoric figures that he appeared to be supported on their shoulders. The memorial faced Palazzo Reale, an immense mass of discordant parts erected in various ages; Courts of Justice occupied the ground floor, and batteries of cannon defended the approach. The Queen's apartments were at the end of an arcaded gallery built in the fifteenth century to accommodate a pair of Archimedes' bronze rams recovered from the ruins of Siracusa. A south wind blew through the

colonnade, and the ram attuned to that quarter maintained a mournful and realistic bleating.

"My God!" cried Emma, "I'd take a hammer to those creatures if I had to live near them. Their noise is uncanny, and 'tis no wonder the Princesses are frightened to walk this way in the dark."

"But examination reveals the process to be quite simple," said Sir William; "the wind blows through numerous small perforations in the animal's flanks and issues from the mouth with a sound pretty much like a bleat."

"The Princess Royal declares they baa when there is no wind."

"That," replied Sir William, "is nonsense."

The Queen sat in an enormous apartment decorated with frescoes of dead game and exotic fruit artistically intermingled. The floor was black marble and the furniture an array of comfortless white-and-gold chairs with crimson brocade seats and an olive-wood table inlaid with cabalistic signs. Six long windows opening down the centres admitted more draught than a pair of large braziers could combat. Maria Carolina sat with her hands in a muff and her feet on a perforated brass box full of wood embers, yet she shook with ague. "See what I ask you to—a salon that lacks the comforts of the meanest cottage. I am selfish to expose you to my tribulations, but it is necessary that many things should be discussed, therefore you must pardon me. Milord Nelson, my dear Chevalier, Emma, my true friend, it is essential to think seriously of saving us. The canaille of nobles have affected the revolution in the capital, the doctrine of liberty has spread to Salerno, and I expect Calabria to accept it to-morrow—then this island will be in great danger. All we can rely on is your powerful aid, Milord, and the generosity of the King of England. My dear Chevalier, have you heard yet if the British Ministry will respond to our plea for money?"

"I'm not authorised to offer any hope of financial aid," Sir William answered; "on the 2nd of December, when the Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was signed by the Marchese di Gallo and me, I represented in the strongest terms to my Government that the monies Your Majesties had collected for the war would be exhausted by April. Strictly *entre nous* I express the opinion that the King, my Royal Master, will not turn a deaf ear to the necessities of valued allies."

"You lift a load from my heart! Dear noble friends, your frankness deserves reciprocal confidence. On learning of General Mack's disap-

pearance and apparent desertion of his command, the King yesterday appointed Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo as Vicar-General to go to Calabria and raise a force to reconquer Naples. The Cardinal's family own vast estates in Calabria Ulteriore, and his family command a following almost equal to an army. The peasantry are very devout, and will rally to the banner of the Prince of the Church. Cardinal Ruffo has courage, enterprise and fidelity to us; the only thing lacking is money. That is why I ask if your great country will be generous and support our efforts to drive back the infamous and common enemy."

Lord Nelson anticipated Sir William's reply. "Nothing could be better than the line of action His Majesty is taking, and nothing shall be wanting on my part in support of the Cardinal. Every effort must be made to prevent the French getting to Messina, the key of Sicily. If this island is true to itself, no harm can happen, but I own to fears that revolutionary principles may be sown here."

"It is like a virulent fever, this cult of *liberty!*" cried the Queen. "None have the strength or fortitude to oppose it. The Emperor looks on and sees all but does nothing, so fearful is he of losing his newly acquired Venetian dominions. Tuscany pays money to the scoundrels, but fifteen thousand French are in the different towns; Lucca is revolutionized. I see that I and my daughters will soon be without subsistence; only a Frederick or a Catherine could keep a kingdom in the world as it is to-day. My family are not equal to it, and I tremble for the security of the Grand Duchess—my poor Luigia Amalia—who will have no idea how to save herself should it become necessary."

"Your Majesty need fear nothing, an English ship-of-war is at this moment at Leghorn, ready to receive the Grand Duke and his family. I foresaw some time ago that unless the Emperor of Austria acted quickly, the British flag would be the only security for his royal brother."

The Queen sprang to her feet, and with tears in her eyes, clasped Lord Nelson's hand. "Saviour and friend, never can I sufficiently testify my gratitude. Let Tuscany go!—I am resigned to material losses, and ask only that I and my children may be reunited to die together."

Some five minutes later the audience terminated. Driving along Il Cassaro, Sir William reverted to the Queen's words. "I suspect that Her Majesty's professed disinterest in government arises from chagrin; she would be less disposed to look for happiness in a

sepulchre if she felt herself possessed of her former power. However, it appears that a firm line is to be taken at last: Cardinal Ruffo has the reputation of a bold and ambitious man, and he certainly enjoys considerable influence in the Calabrias. But my opinion remains fixed that all will be lost if the French army comes within reach. Throughout the Kingdom there has long been complaint of a total want of justice and good government, and in the provinces want and misery are universal, so that few, should it come to a trial, would think such a government worth fighting for. Neapolitans certainly do not love the French, but if they promised a lower price for bread and oil, friendliness would result immediately, for a true patriotic spirit does not, I believe, exist in Italy."

Lord Nelson returned to dinner at Villa Bastioni; responding to a hint, Emma and Mrs. Cadogan left Sir William to drink wine and privately converse with his guest. Later in the evening Emma learnt the purport of the manœuvre.

"I told Nelson of the offer made to me of Palazzo Palagonis, and was quite frank about my present embarrassed circumstances. He at once volunteered to lend what was needed, and suggested, without any prompting on my part, that he should share the house and expenses with me. He finds his health suffering from the bad air of the harbour, and thinks he should benefit from the fresh breezes of the Marina. He will lend nine hundred and twenty-seven pounds—four hundred and twenty-seven pounds to send to Smith, the rest a half-year's rent to the estate of Prince Palagonia and to start our establishment."

"But can Nelson afford it?" Emma anxiously inquired.

"The loan comes at an opportune moment. He expects to receive by Captain Darby letters from London giving a definite statement of the annuity voted by Parliament. It can hardly be less than two thousand pounds per annum; the Irish House will almost certainly grant a pension in addition."

By the end of the month the British Minister to the King of the Two Sicilies was again keeping open house in sumptuous style. Palazzo Palagonia was an extensive building of white stucco embellished with pilasters, balustrades and statues; it crowned a hillock and was reached by three terraces and curved flights of marble stairs. The principal apartments looked over the city wall to the Marina and the sea; Lord Nelson, his secretary, Lieutenant John Tyson, and Tom Allen, occupied a suite of eight rooms on the mezzanine where busi-

ness was transacted. On the arrival of the convoy the Admiral's flag was shifted to the *Bellerophon*, and the *Vanguard* sailed for Malta to reinforce the blockade. Captain Darby lost no time in delivering to Emma a letter from the Commander-in-Chief. It ran:

"I shall never cease to admire the magnanimous conduct of your Royal friend and self during the late severe trials at Naples, and during your short voyage to Palermo. The page of history will be greatly enriched by the introduction of this scene in it, for the greatness of both your minds, and the firmness and ability shewn in the most critical situation that ever two human beings were placed in, surpasses all that we read of! May Heaven have in store blessings for you both. Base indeed, must be the Briton, who will not sacrifice the last drop of his blood for the preservation of two such exalted characters.

"God bless you, my dear Madam, and enable you to persevere in the comfort and support of the great and amiable Queen, your friend, to whom I hope you will pay my most dutiful and respectful homage, and rest assured of the most lasting regard, and esteem of your Ladyship's

Truly affectionate
St. Vincent."

Emma was enraptured and kissed the letter. "Now, could anything be wrote handsomer than that?" she demanded of Lord Nelson and Sir William. "I declare I love the old Earl, and but for making his wife jealous, I'd tell him so!"

Nelson answered enthusiastically: "I'll give your message, for I love him too. Lord St. Vincent is not like so many who, on rising to high places, become all whalebone and buckram. Listen to the noble way he supports me against the Swedish Knight:

"I am not surprised at your feelings being outraged at the bold attempt Sir Sidney Smith is making to wrest a part of your Squadron from you. . . . The ascendancy this gentleman has over all His Majesty's Ministers is to me astonishing, and that they should have sent him out after the strong objection I made to Lord Spencer passes my understanding. For the sake of your Country and the existence of its power in the Levant, modulate your feelings and continue in your command. . . . I trust the greatness of your mind will keep up the body, and that you will not think of abandoning the Royal Family

you have by your firmness and address preserved from the fate of their Royal relations in France. . . .’

“To prevent any further mistakes His Lordship has ordered Sir Sidney to put himself immediately under my command, which I suppose the great Plenipo will not like!”

“Then you have abandoned for this moment the plan of going home?” Sir William said, with a query in his voice.

“As things are, my anxious mind would not allow me. I am told six French first-rates are fitting out at Brest to make a push for the Mediterranean, and it is supposed their object is Malta or Egypt. From Minorca Commodore Duckworth presses hard for ships to reinforce his squadron, as the Dons threaten to invade the island with gun-boats besides Ships of the Line. The gallant Ball, for lack of a proper force, has just failed in an attempt to storm Valletta. The Maltese were over the first ditch, but retired: I would I were with Ball, and not tied so fast here by Their Sicilian Majesties that I cannot move!”

But life had compensations. Captain Darby was also the bearer of letters from the Lord Chancellor expressing the thanks of the British House of Peers, from the Earl of Clare representing the House of Lords of Ireland and from the Speakers of both Houses of Commons. Parchments were emblazoned with the gratitude of City Companies for the great victory over the French Fleet: Lord Nelson learnt that he was a Freeman of London and of Liverpool. A Mr. Rimbaut, an admiring stranger, sent verses of his own composition entitled: *The Hero of the Nile or Nelson Victorious*.

Sir William’s thoughts turned to the material aspect. “But my dear friend, what pecuniary acknowledgment have ye received?”

“From the Parliament of Great Britain for my life and my two next heirs, two thousand pounds per annum; from the Irish Parliament a pension unspecified, but supposed to be the same as Earl St. Vincent’s and Lord Duncan’s—one thousand pounds a year—and from the East India Company a grant of ten thousand pounds. In short, I am the great little man and wallow in wealth!”

No official accounts reached Naples, but graphic tales of street fighting were brought to Palermo by refugees. Prince Moliterno and the Duca di Roccaromana, “Generals of the People” elected by the *lazzaroni*, had almost immediately betrayed their followers. Finding themselves tricked, the populace fought savagely with knives, broken

glass and weapons seized from Neapolitan troops disembarking from Leghorn. Short shrift was given to suspected Jacobins: the Duca della Torre and his brother Don Clemente Filomarino were dragged from their palace to the Marinella, where they were shot and their bodies cast on a fire. Losses were said to be eleven thousand before the Jacobins succeeded in hoisting the *tricolor* from the fort of Sant' Elmo, an agreed signal to General Championnet waiting with three thousand troops outside the gates. A government was immediately set up composed of Neapolitan Jacobins and French Generals. On the 31st of January the Tree of Liberty was erected opposite Castel Nuovo and the gigantic bronze figure by Fansaga facing the palace was capped with a *bonnet-rouge*.

"The most disgraceful factor is the attitude of the priesthood," declared Maria Carolina. "The red, blue and yellow flag of what the French robbers are pleased to call the 'Parthenopean Republic' is made from hangings torn off the walls of San Martino, and the Prior actually gave a great supper to French officers and Neapolitan traitors of both sexes, who danced afterwards with the *Certosini* looking on. *Mon Dieu!* To what have we come? Monks watching Jacobin harlots dancing with murderous atheists! How we are betrayed, and most cruelly by General Mack! It is now certain that he went off with his *État Major*, horses, equipages, baggage, posting through Rome with the kind permission of General Championnet! As a consequence the people grievously wounded the Duca della Salandra, whom they mistook for Mack."

"What will happen to the poor old Mesdames of France?" Emma asked, but continued without pausing: "Lord Nelson says *La Minerva* was to have gone from Messina to take the Princesses to Trieste, but the sailors deserted the frigate, declaring their officers are Jacobins."

"The old women will have to trust in God, like the rest of us. I have done all I can! For ourselves I foresee no refuge but on board the ship of our brave preserver. Great Britain alone gives us aid—from the Court of Vienna we have heard nothing since November. And the Russians! The Tsar Paul a long time ago spoke of sending many battalions of infantry, artillery, and a detachment of Cossacks who would march through Turkish territory to Zara and thence cross the Adriatic to Taranto. Our Ambassador has long had instructions to sign such a treaty—but we hear nothing. We wait; we go on waiting. . . . But where are the Russians?"

Later in the day Emma put the question to Lord Nelson, who

shrugged his shoulders. "I've heard that sixty thousand Russians are arrived at Salzburg, on the German side of the Tyrol, but as the Russians have been *marching* the whole war, they will, I fear, arrive too late in Italy."

Prospects were at their gloomiest when a *speronara* brought three commissaries from Malta who came to plead for corn, stating there was not seven days' supply of bread in the island. Instead of applying to General Acton, the deputies went to Lord Nelson, who, in his dilemma, consulted Sir William.

"It appears to the Maltese as it does to me, that His Majesty desires to be their Sovereign, but without responsibility," the Admiral irritably remarked. "All that these poor people ask is six months' credit, when they will make their payments in money or cotton. They agree that the King of Naples is their legitimate monarch, but insist that the English flag must fly with his when the French surrender. They pressed me to accept the island for Great Britain, but I attach no value to it for us. To say the truth, its possession by England would be a useless and enormous expense, but it is a place of such consequence to the French, that any cost ought to be incurred to drive them out."

"I believe we shall see the Tsar putting in his claim as Grand Master of the Order of St. John," Sir William replied. "'Twas not courtesy alone which prompted a Russian ship to visit Captain Ball and leave with him proclamations for the island!'"

"I do not trouble myself about the re-establishment of the Order of St. John at Malta now you have a written assurance from His Sicilian Majesty that he will never cede the Sovereignty of the island to any other power without the consent of His Britannic Majesty. I hate the Russians, and the poor islanders have been grievously oppressed long enough by the Order. Unfortunately I see little prospect of the siege ending; Ball is indefatigable, but several vessels with provisions are got in. In short, my dear Sir William, everything makes me sick—to see things go to the devil, and not have the means of prevention."

General Acton was not effusive in his response to the Maltese appeal, but when the matter was referred to Ferdinando, he expressed anger that his faithful Maltese subjects should want for any comforts or necessities. Six thousand salms of corn were promised if Captain Ball would send to Girgenti to fetch it, Neapolitan seamen having an aversion to going afloat in winter.

Throughout February the *sirocco* blew, prostrating those of weak constitution and debilitating even the healthy. Riding a white horse and preceded by an assistant carrying a jar of leeches and a baize bag of instruments, Doctor Nudi paid a daily visit to most of the refugees from Naples. At social gatherings conversation centred upon cantharides, clysters, bleedings, and the merits of Peruvian bark. Lady Acton was incurably ill; Lady Knight, doomed but valiant, entertained her friends in the mezzanine of a palazzo adjacent to Sir William's. A move into such expensive quarters was rendered possible by news of a legacy of two thousand five hundred pounds left to the family of Sir Joseph Knight by an unknown chimney-sweep of the same name.

"It sounds like a fairy tale, but it is true as the affidavits kept at Doctors' Commons," announced the gallant dowager. "The letter came from a most respectable attorney, and our benefactor lived at Sherbourne in Dorsetshire, where, by the way, one wouldn't expect to find sufficient sooty chimneys to provide such a handsome nest egg. The sweep's savings and her father's legacy together will make my daughter's fortune seven thousand five hundred pounds, besides expectations from me, and I shan't live long."

Emma and Lady Knight were alone, Cornelia having gone to inquire after Carry Græffer, who had fallen a victim of influenza the moment she and Mr. Græffer became tenants of Villa Bastion.

Lady Knight took Emma's hands and looked earnestly into her face. "I'm not one who asks favours, nor do I approve of discussing private concerns of others—but circumstances overcome principles. I've guessed for a long time that Cornelia is not indifferent to Captain Davidge Gould of the *Audacious*. Whether he reciprocates her feelings I can't be sure, but I have known gentlemen's inclinations to be turned in a miraculous manner by the weight of a little fortune. Now, Emma dear, could you see that the information reaches the *Audacious* Captain in a round-about way? I confess I should await death more equably if I knew that my dear Corri would not be left lonely in the world."

Emma's eyes filled with sympathetic tears as she leant forward to kiss Lady Knight's wrinkled, pale cheek. "If Captain Gould doesn't love Cornelia he must be such a great fool as not to deserve a wife," Emma declared with hearty confidence. "But I'll take care he learns of her circumstances; if he is not rich he may be holding back on that account."

Nelson willingly lent his aid in forwarding romance, and promised to enlist Captain Ball's sympathy.

Sir William advised discretion. "Miss Knight is admirable in small doses," he remarked, "but volubility in perpetuity would prove too much for any man."

Emma was indignant. "How unfair you are, Sir Will'um—yet you crack-up Cornelia's virtue higher than any woman's!"

"My dear, I've told ye before that virtue is admirable in its way, but a poor substitute for charm. A woman whose only grace is virtue should remain single, for she would very surely bore a husband."

Lord Nelson, who had gaily supported Emma's match-making, suddenly looked thoughtful and unhappy. Turning to a pile of correspondence, he became absorbed, until, jumping up, he quitted the room, muttering that a paper was lost.

That night he alarmed the household by crying out as a spasm of the heart awoke him from sleep. The disorder had attacked him twice since the Battle of the Nile, once on board the *Vanguard* and subsequently at Palazzo Sessa. Turpentine stupes and hard friction were the only relief; until water could be heated, Tom Allen rubbed his master's breast and side. While the paroxysm was acute Nelson lay rigid, his hand clenched and his flexed arm pressed against his eyes. Standing anxiously between Sir William and Mrs. Cadogan, Emma marvelled how fragile a hero could be; without epaulettes and uniform he looked smaller than Will'um Faddy, who was but fifteen. . . .

After a long interval Gaetano staggered through the door bearing a cauldron of boiling water. Mrs. Cadogan plunged into it a flannel petticoat sprinkled with turpentine, which she wrung between two sticks. As the hot fomentation touched his skin, Lord Nelson moved his arm and saw Emma.

"Lady Hamilton, I don't want you to see me like this. But I'm not beaten," he gasped defiantly; "to-morrow I'll be quite well. Please me by going back to bed, and in the morning we'll laugh over the foolish heart of a British Admiral."

"Leave us, Emma," said Sir William.

Feeling unwanted and rebuked, Emma trailed from the room and across a wide landing lit by long windows opening upon a *loggia* that faced the sea. Ashen light of a full moon revealed the shimmering bay fading to a shadowy meeting with the luminous sky; it showed white effigies of bygone kings peering forlornly through the pleached alleys of the Marina, and tormented with phantoms a gaunt black

dog howling in the roadway. Despite the cold, Emma opened the window and stepped out into a wider vista. Leaning against the parapet, she looked down upon the terraced garden descending in wide steep steps to the balustrade topping the ancient city wall. Silhouetted on her right was the pointed headland of Monte Catalano, on her left the Marina curved along the shore to the port and a forest of masts etched by the moonlight upon the gleaming rock of Monte Pellegrino rising like a gigantic coronet against the lustrous sky. A fountain splashed on the topmost terrace, and the gaunt black dog continued to howl: the two sounds mingling drowned the soft patter of Sir William's slippers.

"What are ye doing?" he querulously demanded. "Is it not enough to have Nelson ill, without offering yourself as a candidate for the grave?" A shudder shook him from head to foot. "Come in, Emma, come in! This is a most injurious climate!"

By the breakfast hour Lord Nelson was at his desk engaged upon his immense correspondence, but Sir William was unable to rise. Since five o'clock attacks of sickness had been so frequent and severe that he was almost unconscious. On the arrival of Doctor Nudi, Emma left her husband and joined the Admiral.

"Thank God to see you!" she said; "I never hoped you could be up this morning. But should you be? Do you feel well enough?"

"The pain has entirely gone off, I only feel weak. Perhaps the spasm may not come again these six months, but some one day it will do my business for me."

"Oh, don't say that," she implored; "indeed, I can't bear to think of anything so dreadful. And now Sir Will'um's ill again—I sent for the doctor at a quarter after six, but he's only come now."

"Lady Hamilton, you should have told me at once, instead of encouraging me to enlarge on my spasm, which has gone and left me none the worse. I'll go to good Sir William and inquire if there is anything I can do."

Lord Nelson was absent for some time; he returned to find Emma sitting despondently as he had left her.

"Treatment has made Sir William a little better, and we were able to discuss the best means of curing his malady. It seems quite clear that some months in the cool airs of England are required to set him up. The moment Mr. Lock arrives to take up his duties as Consul, I have promised that you and Sir William shall have the *Goliath* to carry you to England."

"And leave you here?" Emma asked in a flat voice.

"At present I cannot move. Would the Court but let me go, I should be better, I believe; for here I am writing from morn till eve."

"If we must visit England, will you stay on in this house?"

"'Tis healthier here than in the port—but in my opinion the air of Palermo is very bad. You may be sure I shall not quit my post without absolute necessity. If the Emperor moves, I hope yet to return the royal family to Naples. I will confess I am at times ill at my ease, but it is my duty to submit."

Hearing Doctor Nudi's footsteps on the stairs, Emma prepared to see him off, but on reaching the door she turned back and impulsively held out her hands to Nelson. "Will you be sorry to see us go?"

"I *will not* think what it will be like without you."

Conflicting reports came from Naples: some observers said they had seen the *lazzaroni* dancing gaily round the Tree of Liberty arm-in-arm with Republican invaders, others declared that five hundred Frenchmen had been murdered, mostly by the women.

"What a good thing," chuckled Ferdinando, "that I would not listen to Fra Rocco when he wished to make nuns of the prostitutes in Quarto Capuana!"

His amusement was not communicated to Carolina, who held in her hand one of General Championnet's manifesti placarded on the walls of Naples:

"Who is the Capet who pretends to reign over you, by virtue of the Pope's investiture? Who is the crowned scoundrel who dares to govern you? Let him dread the fate of his rival, who crushed by his despotism the rising liberty of the Gauls!"

The pernicious doctrine of *égalité* was spreading to Calabria; several towns acknowledged the Parthenopean Republic as a French protectorate—the infection appeared in Sicily at the ports of Messina, Catania and Trapani.

On the 8th of February Cardinal Ruffo launched his counter-revolution, the crusade of the *Santa Fede*. He landed on the beach of La Catona, near Bagnara in the province of Calabria Ulteriore, where he was joined by three hundred men recruited from the vassals of his family. In no position to be squeamish, the Vicar-General added to his force a large number of criminals released from the jails of Sicily by favour of the Governor of Messina. But not all were des-

peradoes who rallied to his standard. The "Army of the Holy Faith" attracted proselytes among devout peasants eager to destroy the godless French and loyalists anxious to save the Monarchy. The Cardinal decorated his men with the white cross and the red cockade of the Bourbons; sins committed in the cause of the Church and the King were absolved in advance and eternal bliss promised to all who died sending the Republicans to perdition. "*Viva la Santa Fede! Viva il Re!*" yelled the ragged legion.

Sanfedisti, unlike Ferdinando's army of fifty thousand, who were dispersed by fear, boldly marched up the toe of Italy and attacked every town in their path. Garrisons that resisted were wiped out, suspected Jacobins met cold steel, and no time was wasted over justice. In less than a month two additional *bande della Santa Fede* sprang up. The first, skirmishing in the neighbourhood of Cotenza, was led by Gaetano Mammone, a miller of Calabria Citra, whose favourite beverage was said to be warm human blood quaffed from a skull. The second and more important band was commanded by Michele Pezza, an apostate monk of Itri whose audacious murders and robberies had earned him the nickname of Fra Diavolo and a sentence of decapitation on capture. The outlaw had sailed from Gaëta to Tropea to place his valour at the service of God and the King; he returned with the badges of a *Sanfediste* and a free pardon signed by the Vicario-Generale. From a stronghold in the mountains between Portella and Mola di Gaëta, Fra Diavolo and his *banditti* attacked French troops in the manner that had proved remunerative when applied to rich travellers following the coast road from Rome to Naples. Companies of soldiers were cut off and shot, stragglers and couriers were stabbed, men, women and children were hurled over the nearest precipice; efficient warfare that seriously interrupted French communications.

Encouraging reports of Cardinal Ruffo's advance in the Calabrias had a stimulating effect on the royal exiles, but Their Majesties' optimism was not shared by Lord Nelson, who feared the development of revolution in Sicily. To preserve Messina and the Torre del Faro was his first concern, but the troops at his disposal were unreliable and insufficient to hold the citadel against determined attacks by French soldiers or Jacobins. In the dangerous dilemma he sent an express to General Sir Charles Stuart asking if troops could be spared from the garrison at Minorca; he also wrote requests for ships and men to the Turkish and Russian Admirals blockading Corfu.

"But I anticipate nothing beyond what we can do ourselves," said Nelson. "Troubridge shall go to Messina, whatever has been the result of his expedition to Egypt. If he can raise three hundred good marines from the ships, so much the better, for I expect nothing but treachery from the Sicilian troops embarked in the *Principe Reale*."

Claims of frightened royalties upon British protection detached a number of ships that could ill be spared from active service; the *Terpsichore* conveyed Charles Emmanuel of Savoy to refuge in Sardinia, the *Rainha de Portugal* carried the Mesdames of France from Brindisi to Trieste; the *Minotaur* waited at Leghorn for the Grand Duke and his family should flight become necessary.

At the moment when the security of crowned heads seemed most precarious, Lord Nelson was made a Freeman of Palermo, a gesture thought by the Court to have a good effect upon the loyalty of the people. The Freedom of the City was presented in a gold casket brought on a silver salver. All the magistrates made speeches, the High-Admiral embraced his brother in arms. "We show our pride by conferring upon you the Freedom of this ancient City, an honour bestowed only once before on a foreigner when it was given to King Louis XI."

"He needn't have gone out of his way to refer to France," said Emma afterwards; "maybe it was meant friendly, but it sounded suspicious."

Gloom and foreboding remained in the ascendant until the 6th of March when a vessel from Corfu brought the long-hoped-for Treaty of Alliance between the Tsar Paul and the King of the Sicilies; the Court also learnt that the Neapolitan Ambassador at Constantinople had signed a treaty with the Sublime Port whereby the Grand Signior agreed to place ten thousand Albanian irregulars at Ferdinando's disposal. The courier who delivered these welcome documents also brought a packet for Lord Nelson found to contain a snuff-box from the Tsar of Russia, decorated with his picture set in diamonds.

"Most magnificent!" the Admiral ejaculated in gratified tones. "This is certainly very handsome of the Emperor, but it shall not prevent my keeping a sharp look-out on his movements against the good Turk. I know it is his favourite object to get possession of Malta as a prelude to a future war when Constantinople will change masters. This is so clear that a man must be blind not to see it."

Four days later Ferdinando's prospects of recovering his Kingdom were further enhanced by the arrival of the *Aurora* with five trans-

ports and store-ships bringing from Minorca General Sir Charles Stuart and the 30th and 89th Regiments of Foot. Sir William, acting as interpreter, was unable to do justice to Their Majesties' gratitude, an omission which caused General Stuart no concern, as he cut short every speech that did not bear upon the business in hand. Within three hours of landing he set off on horseback for Messina with papers in his pocket giving him the absolute command of that fortress.

Care and despondency slipped like a grey cloak from Lord Nelson's shoulders; his cheeks were flushed and his voice resonant as he said: "The General's quick decision has probably not only saved this Kingdom, but may be the instrument of driving the French out of Naples. It will be an electric shock both to good and bad subjects. Europe may yet be happy, if Austria and Prussia will exert themselves."

"It certainly is a most interesting moment," Sir William acknowledged. "If things come to a head I shall really feel reluctant to quit my post, even though I can do so with complete propriety now I have put Mr. Lock in the way of carrying on correspondence with Lord Grenville."

"You seem so much better, Sir Will'um, let us wait a little longer," Emma pleaded. "Think how wild we should be if the King and Queen was put back on their thrones, and us not here to see it done."

Lord Nelson walked rapidly up and down the room as was his wont. "I am reluctant to ask you to remain knowing that rest and bracing air are necessary to set you up. Yet I cannot disguise that I shall be at the greatest loss without you and Lady Hamilton in negotiations between the Court, the nobles and the people that must take place if Naples is recovered. I fear I may be tricked between them all."

"Although, as ye know, the confused state of my affairs calls loudly for my return home, I confess I should not be happy going at this moment. The first of all satisfactions is the sensation of having done one's duty. I would not like to leave you to manage without languages or experience of this Court and country, and although I am tired and worn out almost, I will not abandon Their Sicilian Majesties if my assistance could aid them to glorious prospects. Indeed, the return of Ferdinando to his throne cannot be far distant with such handsome assistance at his disposal. Acton tells me that the Emperor of Russia has promised no less than eleven thousand troops to remain eight years in Sicilian service should they be required."

In Naples the French garrison and the Neapolitan Jacobins had no thought of a monarchical restoration. The Principe Moliterno and the Duca d'Angri departed for Paris to return the thanks of the Parthenopean Republic to the Directory for assistance given to Naples in planting the Tree of Liberty. General Championnet framed fresh edicts, among them a law confiscating estates of absentee landlords who did not return to the Neapolitan Republic before the end of March. Many noble refugees were concerned, the majority elected to remain in Sicily, trusting to recover their lands on the restoration of the monarchy. To Their Majesties' chagrin, Il Brigadiere Caracciolo complied with the French ultimatum, declaring himself bound by honour to preserve the estates of the Caracciolo at Avellino.

"His manner was very strange," Carolina confided to her English confidants "When he spoke of a speedy return to Palermo, he looked at neither of us. Even His Majesty became suspicious. 'Beware of meddling with French politics,' the King said. 'Avoid the snares of Republicans, Don Francesco. *I know I shall recover my Kingdom of Naples.*'"

"I'm glad his master thought fit to warn him," Lord Nelson responded, "though I believe pique to be at the bottom of Caracciolo's behaviour—not disloyalty."



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

SPRING, tardy in coming, arrived with a rush at the end of March. The sun shone with agreeable warmth from a cloudless blue sky, a film of tender green was drawn like a coverlet over fields of rich dark earth. Orchards of orange, citron and bergamot flooded the air with fragrance; the town ditches were rendered beautiful by feathery fronds of wild asparagus and polished leaves of *Palma Christi*. Prickly pears growing along the rocky shore thrust forth new green discs and produced unexpected red and yellow blossoms on the warted surfaces of the old. Shabby mule-drawn vehicles disappeared from the roads; in the mornings and late afternoons Il Cassaro, La Nova and the Marina were thronged with prancing horses harnessed by silver trappings to carriages elegantly ornamented with painted scenes and gilded carving. Every evening the nobility and gentry drove to the Moorish gateway of Flora Reale for a promenade in the pleached alleys or to seclude themselves in the arbours around the *rotone*. The centre of the garden was the rendezvous of fashion and the axis on which arcades of orange and lemon trees converged like spokes of a wheel.

Waiting beside the fountain for Sir William, Emma could see to the end of each shaded walk. Though she had kept the tryst for half an hour there was no sign of him, not of anyone but John Græffer, snipping with shears at the end of a western alley. Mr. Græffer had been snipping all morning, the clash of blades had punctuated his wife's conversation as she confided her woes to Emma. Carry was still sufficiently an invalid to maintain her right to rest on the *loggia*.

"Mr. Græffer goes on at me for not coming down to superintend the cook—says 'tis a wife's duty to insure the comfort of her spouse. I reply: 'I do that far better by heeding my health and appearance than if I was to go down to that vault which calls itself a kitchen.

Were it not for me,' I said, 'you'd have no money, let alone food and a servant to cook it.' And that's the truth, Emma! When we landed here, the King would have forgotten his responsibility if he'd had his way. But I was firm, though respectful. 'Sire,' I said, 'tis not Mr. Græffer's fault that General Championnet is living at Caserta Palace—Mr. Græffer would gladly have fulfilled his agreement with Your Majesty to make the English garden a bit of Britain in Italy. But a contract is a contract,' I said, 'and I'd not have left my home in Chester unless I'd thought I was coming to security. What about my little girl?' I asked. 'Will her father let her want, as want she must if Mr. Græffer gets no salary?' The King declared he had no thought of failing us, but I could see for myself that Palermo was well supplied with gardens. 'There are gardens, but what gardens!' I said. 'Look at Flora Reale and the Marina—neglected, utterly neglected!' The upshot was that old Fra Dragonetti who made the gardens years ago was sent back to his monastery. But the fuss! Every magistrate in Palermo up in arms! Although we're here, and Mr. Græffer snips all day long to show his diligence, I don't feel secure. As for cash, all I've got is thirty onza. Emma, what would you do? "

"God knows! I never could keep a full purse, and when 'tis empty I manage! "

"You're not north country in that! I'm true Cheshire, with a money sense. Do you know what I've done? Engaged a band of musicians to play in one of the temples on the *rotone*, and in the other I'm going to sell lemonade, and capillaire. The drinks won't cost anything to make, and I shall charge a *tari* a tumbler."

"'Tis a good idea," Emma acknowledged. "People will drink, and eat too, as they listen to the music. But what have you done with the canary-birds that lived in the temples? "

"Put them altogether in the other two—the birds are poor things, all sisters and brothers like the royal families of Europe."

While waiting for Sir William, Emma saw Carry's preparations. The temples dedicated to Libra and Capricorn showed signs of hasty cleaning; chairs and music-stands stood in Libra; Capricorn was fitted out like the lemonade stalls on the Toledo at Naples. A table, covered with a white cloth, surmounted by a wooden triumphal arch painted in every colour and gaily decorated with boughs of myrtle, was festooned with oranges and lemons interspersed with flowers and paper banners of gold, blue and scarlet. The four grotesque temples marking the Cardinal points were incongruous companions to a white

marble Colossus standing with his feet in the fountain; the embellishment of the *rotone* was another example of the Palermitans' mania for bizarre monuments.

Although she had waited so long, Emma was not impatient. The sun was brilliant and pleasantly warm, the canaries sang joyously in their cramped quarters, the air was fragrant with orange blossom, and she felt young and expectant as a young maid despite being within a month of her thirty-fourth birthday. Good God! How different all would have been had Sir Will'um determined to take his leave in England. 'Twould have been good-bye to glory and romance. . . .

Glancing along a northern alley, she descried Lord Nelson, a small alert figure walking with brisk purpose. The sight engendered happiness and alarm. Rising from her perch on the edge of the fountain, she ran to meet him, crying: "Where's Sir Will'um?"

"At home—some bad news has unhinged him and he asked me to come instead."

"Good God! What has happened?"

"The *Colossus* has foundered on the rocks of Scilly, and Sir William's collection of vases has gone with her. It appears she arrived safe with her convoy, but drove from her anchor on a rock and sank in the midst of the other ships; the crew were saved except one or two. I know the cases were deep in the hold, so fear there is no hope of recovering anything till the ship falls to pieces."

"Oh, poor, poor Sir Will'um! But 'tis not the best part of the collection that has gone—the finest vases are safe in the *Samuel and Jane*, though Sir Will'um won't believe me. Still, 'tis bad enough—How did the news come? From Lord St. Vincent?"

"Not directly, though the frigate we saw on the horizon early this morning was from Gibraltar. She carried a post from England, and Sir William got a letter from that fellow Charles Greville, reporting the disaster." Lord Nelson's tone was scathing.

"How should Greville know?"

"It appears he is hand in glove with the Ministry as well as with the Court, and was given the information by Lord Spencer at a levee. The loss of the *Colossus* is thought no concern of mine, as Captain Murray was never under my command. Such things are!"

Emma hung her head, knowing the real cause of his anger. "Greville always got to hear things ahead of everyone else," she said.

"Damn him!" Leaving Emma, Lord Nelson walked briskly to the

Temple of Aries and back. "You must forgive my irritable temper, but I see much on every side that is provoking, and expect greater trials in future. Lord Keith's advent as Second in Command of the Lisbon and Mediterranean station, coupled with persistent rumours of Lord St. Vincent's ill health, fills me with apprehension lest the great Admiral may feel himself unable to carry on. Though Lord Keith is a fine officer—none better—Lord St. Vincent is the very ablest sea officer His Majesty has, and is the best and truest friend that can be in this world. My feelings will be desperate should he relinquish command of the Fleet."

Emma and Lord Nelson began to walk towards the Marina along a path carpeted with fallen petals and somnolent with warm sweetness and the drone of bees. Overhead waxy blossoms formed a fragrant canopy; here and there early oranges hung down like yellow lanterns.

"A while ago I was too happy," Emma sighed, "thinking how much brighter were the prospects; the Queen likely to be restored to the throne and Sir Will'm and I proud witnesses of your glory. 'Tis never safe to count on blessings."

"Lady Hamilton, forgive me! Your sympathy encourages me to say more than I ought. Indeed, there is nothing to trouble about but Sir William's loss, and even that is not grievous if the best vases are safe in the transport." Shyly he patted Emma's bare arm. "Don't let your dear mind be vexed. Now here is a bit of news that you will rejoice over—Josiah is appointed to the *Thalia*, a very fine frigate, and I wish he may do credit to himself in her."

"I'm sure he will—the trust imposed in him will keep him steady."

"I've told Josiah he is now on his own bottom, and by his conduct must stand or fall. So that he may have a good example to follow of officer-like behaviour, I shall keep him under the command of Captain Ball, whose conciliatory manners are a model to all."

Leaving the shady arcades of Flora Reale, they met the full glare of noonday. The deserted Marina stretched in a dazzling curve to Porta Felice, where it met the *molo* and the quay of the old port. As they walked along they could see through the balustrade into the gardens of handsome villas facing the sea, and, as the terraces of Palazzo Palagonia were elevated far above the city wall, they saw when still a great way off Sir William sitting under a gay awning beside the fountain.

Emma posted up two flights of steps and arrived breathless. Flinging herself at his feet, she took his hands and stroked them compassionately.

"I'm so sorry, so sorry," she cried, "but truly the best are not gone. I know I'm right, Sir Will'um: the finest vases never went to England. Lord Nelson will have the cases got out of the transport, then we'll open them and set your mind at ease."

"My dear Emma, I know ye mean kindly, but at this moment my chagrin is only aggravated by foolish comfort. I knew what I was about: the eight cases entrusted to Captain Murray contained the best vases. Never again will such a collection appear, as I paid well and got everything that was most precious, and now few are to be found. As to the cases in the transport, I couldn't bear to look at them, knowing they contain only black vases without figures."

Lord Nelson stood looking contrite and embarrassed. "Would to God I had never suggested sending the cases in any ship but my own."

Sir William replied in hasty disclaimer. "Don't reproach yourself for a moment, my dear fellow. It was a golden opportunity, and I was thankful for it. Who, in heaven's name, could anticipate such an accident?"

"What did Greville say?" Emma inquired.

Sir William produced from his pocket a couple of packets sealed with the swan and coronet of Warwick. "There are two letters," he said, "the first written on January the 9th, when Charles first heard of the disaster. The second, written on the following day after he had got details from Lord Spencer. In this Charles says:

"I write again this morning being more anxious concerning the *Colossus* since I heard how much you was interested. I find that she sunk in deep water near shore, & it is probable when fine weather comes some things may come ashore, at least I augur well from this circumstance. They took on board Lord Shouldham, and to avoid the superstition of sailors put him in a lead coffin and enclosed it in a long box, to be unlike a coffin. Some one who knew it was between decks and likely to be got at, told the Scilly people that there was a great treasure in a box, describing it, & when the guns &c. had broken all before them, & the ship was on its side, they got the box, & you may suppose their disappointment when their prize proved a dead admiral. I find your boxes were deep in the hold; therefore, till the

ship is to pieces, they will remain there, &, even if they withstand the shocks of a ship, whose timbers, &c. give way to their force, it is a hope but a forlorn one.’”

Emma sighed: “I would that your cases and Lord Shouldham’s box could have changed places.”

“Damn his body!” Sir William said with unwonted anger. “It can be of no use but to the worms, but my collection would have given information to the most learned.”

Emma was gazing across the Marina to the bay where British ships of war made a brave show. They comprised the *Minotaur*, *Zealous*, *Swiftsure*, *Seahorse* and *Culloden*, embarking troops and stores before sailing to blockade the Bay of Naples. Captain Troubridge commanded the squadron, and was furnished with royal instructions to reconquer the islands. Counting on speedy triumph, the King supplied the English commander with a governor for the island of Procida in the person of Don Michele de Curtis, staunch Royalist and Judge of the Vicaria.

The squadron sailed on the morning of March 31st, watched by the royal family from the *loggia* of Palazzo Palagonia. Neapolitan affairs prospered and Their Majesties were in good spirits; two days previously seven belated couriers had reached Palermo bringing the welcome news that war had at last broken out between France and Austria and Field-Marshal Suvárov was marching to Italy at the head of one hundred and twenty thousand Austro-Russian troops. Delight at this intelligence was only slightly modulated by a secret dispatch from the Marchese di Gallo reporting the scheming of Baron Thurgut, Austrian Chancellor, to deflect to the north of Italy the Russian army corps promised, under the recently signed Treaty of St. Petersburg, to embark at Zara for Taranto.

As he watched the British squadron heading out to sea, Ferdinando expressed fears that Naples could not be recovered without Russian assistance. “That is why I so quickly sent the Chevalier Antonio Michereux to Corfu with instructions to do everything possible to thwart the machinations of and effect the immediate embarkation of General Hermann’s army.”

Taking his telescope from his eye, Lord Nelson answered: “Sire, if twelve thousand Russians should arrive and a bold push was made for Naples it might be recovered in a moment. I am ready to assist in the enterprise; I only wish to die in the cause, but I hope Chevalier

Michereux will prevent the Russian and Turkish ships coming here without troops, *for they would be of no use.*"

Ferdinando gave Lord Nelson such a hearty clap on the back that the hero reeled. "Milord Ammiraglio, you have no faith in the dear little Russians, but I hope we shall soon be rejoicing to see them, and with their aid and divine assistance, putting an end to this cursed business."

"My hopes are centred on the British Fleet and Cardinal Ruffo, whose conduct and bravery I admire in all respects," Queen Carolina asserted, with her eyes fixed defiantly on her husband. "His achievements are wonderful, especially as he set out lacking money and arms."

"Ah, that makes no difference to His Eminence, who understands the temper of my people," Ferdinando retorted. "He knows that 'sticks and cakes make good children'. All the same, we cannot go very far without ducats. I do not yet lose hope that Great Britain, seeing our valiant endeavours in the common cause, will eventually afford us financial aid."

Sir William's voice was suave and his face expressionless as he responded to the King's last remark. "I would not have ye build on it, not having been authorised to give the smallest hope of such assistance, but last December, on signing the Treaty of Alliance between my Royal Master and Your Majesty, I took the liberty of informing my Government that the fund collected by Your Majesties for the prosecution of the war must be exhausted by the end of April."

Ferdinando bowed affably. "I feel the utmost confidence in British generosity. But is it not time we heard something from that place called Downing Street?"

"As Your Majesty has good reason to know, there is no regular post, and all letters come through the channel of Lord St. Vincent. The execrable weather in Europe doubtless accounts for some delay. In a letter I recently received from my nephew he told me that nine mails were due from Hamburg, ice having rendered the Elbe inaccessible."

The passive part he was obliged to play in the prosecution of hostilities against the French pressed harshly on Nelson's ardent spirit. Besides transacting the business of sixteen Sail of the Line and conducting all British commerce, he was in constant correspondence with his Commander-in-Chief and Lord Spencer, with St. Petersburg,

Constantinople, Vienna, Venice, Trieste, Smyrna, Florence, Leghorn and Minorca. In addition, he was called upon to advise the Sicilian Court, and had almost become a Secretary of State.

"Nothing would induce me to remain but the confidence reposed in me by King George and Lord St. Vincent, and Their Sicilian Majesties' dependence on my protection." Nelson's elbow rested on a mass of papers, his palm pressed his throbbing head.

Emma looked up from the document she was translating, but saw only his shapely sensitive hand and disordered silky hair.

The weary voice continued: "All at this Court know I have no other desire but of proving myself a faithful servant of my gracious King; therefore, as far as orders go, there is nothing that I propose which is not implicitly complied with. But the execution is dreadful, and almost makes me mad!"

Emma rose briskly and walked round the table to his side. "You don't go out as you should. Look! 'Tis the best part of the day and a full two hours to sundown. Come walking with me; you've done enough writing."

"Lady Hamilton—Emma—I am too worn out even for that joy. You can't think how much my eye hurts—I am almost blind, and stabs of pain dart through my head. I could not bear strong sunlight."

"I'll make a paper shade to tuck inside your hat." Taking his temples between her hands, Emma drew back his head until it rested against her bosom, then, with her finger-tips, she gently stroked his puckered brow. "In a minute the pain will go," she predicted.

He drew a shuddering sigh. "Your touch is magic—soft as a bird's wing."

"Be quiet and still," she admonished. "The weary lines are smoothing away."

Presently he looked up, smiling. Both eyes were strained and blood-shot, the right pupil, injured at the siege of Calvi, was spread over the iris, leaving only a narrow blue rim. The blemish gave him a look of pathos that brought a tremor to Emma's lips.

"All the pain has gone," he announced in a jaunty voice. "Give me your hands—your dear, tender hands. See how wide are the palms, and how generous and supple the fingers. They say when the thumbs bend back 'tis the sign of a ready giver. There! . . . A kiss for each hand. . . . Lady Hamilton, you are an angel, and a very lovely woman. . . . I think you are a witch too. . . ."

"No," she gravely answered. "I'm just—Emma."

On the 4th of April Lord Nelson heard of his promotion to Rear-Admiral of the Red. Immediately Emma saw his commission she insisted that it was her privilege to haul down the blue flag and hoist the red at the *Vanguard's* mizzen.

"How many guns are fired as a salute?" she demanded.

"None—we honour others, not ourselves."

"That's the most unfair thing I ever heard, and if I was King of England I'd make a rule that every promotion had a salvo."

On the following day Emma's delight in a cannonade was satisfied when a salute was fired by the ships at Palermo to celebrate Austrian victories over the French. Overnight had come intelligence, welcome as it was surprising, of the defeat near Bregenz of General Jourdan by the Archduke Charles. Another battle fought between Legnago and Bevilacqua on the borders of the Venetian State had resulted in a loss to the French of five thousand prisoners and three thousand dead.

The Sicilian Court was still in the first exuberance of joy when the *Perseus* arrived from Naples Bay bringing dispatches announcing the capture of all the Ponza Islands. Captain Troubridge reported an enthusiastic welcome from the common people and much villainy among the better classes. He asked for an honest judge to be sent immediately, "to try these miscreants on the spot, that some proper examples may be made."

"How right is the gallant Troubridge," said Ferdinando, pouting his thick lips in a grimace of satisfaction. "It is my intention and desire that all those who were officers in my service and have gone over to the self-styled Parthenopean Republic shall, if they be taken in armed opposition to my forces or those of my allies, be shot within twenty-four hours without any legal formalities."

"Some well-timed and speedy punishments must have the happiest effects," Nelson responded. "I ever preach that rewards and punishments are the foundation of all good government."

"I agree," said General Acton, looking up from the papers he was reading. "By dealing quickly with rebels, treacherous persons meditating infamy against their lawful Sovereign may be checked in their purpose. Among those who may be warned I place the Brigadiere Caracciolo, whose association with the Jacobins is reported to be most suspicious."

"After all we have seen I can expect treason from any of our subjects." Maria Carolina spoke bitterly. "It will not surprise me if Caracciolo turns on us also."

"Should there be foundation for the accusations, Troubridge will discover it," Nelson said decisively.

The transfer of the Court to Palermo had effected a vast change; it seemed as if the inhabitants wanted nothing but encouragement for the development of their industry. Dressmakers and milliners opened shops in little streets off the Ottangolo, an empty palazzo in La Nova was leased to a group of Neapolitan noblemen who furnished it for concerts and balls on the lines of the Accademia de' Nobili at Naples. The venture attained instant popularity among the exiles, who were glad to leave comfortless lodgings for spacious galleries where they might gossip, flirt and gamble; the British also found themselves at home in a rendezvous which supplied many amenities of the Assembly Rooms at Bath and Tunbridge. Daily at five o'clock Sir William's constitutional terminated in the card-room, where he met Lord Montgomerie, Major Lockhart Gordon and John Rushout for a rubber of whist. Emma, who found no pleasure in a game demanding quietness for its prosecution, played *tresetta* if she was in funds or *mouche* when her pocket was empty.

"'Tis fortunate I'm not rich, for I'd be a gambler, I'm sure," she confided to Lord Nelson. "Was you ever tempted that way?"

"I'm too frightened," he answered. "When I was seventeen I won three hundred pounds at a gaming-table; but I could not sleep all night afterwards reflecting what would have been my position had I lost three hundred pounds, for I should not have known how to pay."

"If I were unlucky I should be quite undone; all I possess in the world is one *oncia* and six *carlini*."

Lord Nelson looked his consternation. "Do you really mean that?"

"'Tis true as gospel—I've never had my allowance yet that was due last December. Sir Will'um says he hasn't it to give, and must conserve what he has to meet commitments here and in Naples. When I am quite desperate he gives me a gold piece and tells me to manage. And so I do. I was never one to trouble about money; often as a gal I was without a roof or a penny to bless myself with, but fate always acted kind and gave me a little when I needed it most. When I had it I spent it, and if I had none I got on someways, and so I can now. Emma Hamilton is not different from Emy Lyon."

Nelson walked up and down in great agitation. "My dear Emma, to think you never told me this. Here is Horatio Nelson wallowing in wealth, while his dearest friend lacks the means of buying a gown

or a bit of ribbon. But we will mend it! I'll give you five hundred pounds tomorrow—'twould be this day if Mr. Abraham Gibbs was at his bank. My God! To think you needed money and never told me—that's the cruellest cut of all!"

Emma laughed merrily. "And what should I do with a fortune like that? Sure, 'twould tempt me to go the same road as the Countess Romeri, who even puts her petticoats in pawn so she may indulge her passion for play."

He waved aside her gay objection. "It will be a birthday present. . . . Have I the audacity to speak of a *present* to you who toil hour after hour putting my plans and orders into Italian or French, a job quite beyond the abilities of Tyson or myself? Without your cleverness and tireless work, I could not manage here one moment. I beg you to accept, for your birthday, not a present, but a slight acknowledgment of a debt I can never repay."

"*Duwwch*, there's no present I want, but grateful I'd be to have the India shawls for my attitudes that you said you'd asked Mr. Spencer Smith to get."

"If His Majesty's Joint Minister at the Ottoman Porte pays no more respects to my wishes than does his colleague and brother, Sir Sidney Smith, I shall wait a full due for any attention to be paid to my request. The Swedish Knight flouts my authority, and, from what Troubridge reported, thinks differently from me regarding the French army in Egypt, being willing to grant passports which will allow French ships to pass to France. After the glorious Battle of the Nile, it was my determination never, if I could help it, to permit a single Frenchman to quit Egypt. I consider it nothing short of madness to suffer that band of thieves to return to Europe. 'Twas fortunate for me that Troubridge intercepted the Ambassador of Buonaparte, and thus learnt of his offer to make terms for quitting Egypt with his army. *No*, a thousand times *no*! To Egypt they went with their own consent, and there they shall remain whilst Nelson commands the detached squadron."

At Malta the stubborn resistance of the French garrison to Captain Ball's blockade was another source of anxiety and irritation. Though in great distress and eaten up with scurvy, General Vaubois was able to hold with a few effective troops the almost impregnable fortress of La Valletta. The sufferings of the islanders were scarcely less acute, privation had brought on an endemic fever that rapidly decreased their numbers; love for Captain Ball alone sustained their spirits.

After ten months of fighting for Ferdinando's rights few Maltese looked for succour in return, fewer still were fervent in his cause; they accepted their fate as a necessary evil, as they had submitted in the past to the rule of the Knights of St. John. Only upon learning that their future masters might be Russians did the islanders show signs of rebellion. Fears that they might take the alternative of making peace with the French caused Lord Nelson again to stress the need of sending supplies and money.

"The cost of the blockade falls heavily on Britain," he informed Sir John Acton; "unless this Court sees its way to sending ten thousand pounds to alleviate the melancholy state of these poor people, all the outlay and fag will go for nothing and Malta be lost to His Sicilian Majesty."

"My dear Admiral, this Court has not money to give. I desire to do and obtain all that is agreeable to you, but the Maltese cannot have what there is not."

"Sacrifices must be made, or the islanders may cease resistance and yield to the French. In my opinion they should be supplied with the greatest abundance of provisions at the very cheapest rate. Those who cannot afford to buy should have it given. The same applies to the islands in the Bay of Naples, the inhabitants of which have returned to their allegiance. If His Majesty loses them again it will be very difficult to recover them."

"All you say is true, Milord, but I think there is a proverb 'Bricks cannot be made without straw', which may be paraphrased into 'Charity is not possible from an empty chest'."

Lord Nelson rose to take his leave in haste that scarcely concealed his feelings. "Then the only chance of saving Malta is by my friend Ball, who is adored, and deservedly, by all ranks."

The Admiral returned to Palazzo Palagonia with a headache and much provoked. "I own myself much fitter to be an actor, than the counsellor of proper measures to be pursued, and when I see all our active endeavours coming to naught through the lack of vigour of this Court, it makes me really ill."

Sir William made a foreign gesture of resignation. "Half measures—always half measures. But, my dear Nelson, you must not allow yourself to be disturbed by the southern character. According to their lights, the Court are exerting themselves to the utmost."

Good advice had no effect; Lord Nelson continued to chafe at the apathy around him, and as a counterbalance worked the harder at

employment that was irksome. He sat at his desk from morning to night, and sometimes never went to bed. Sir William's protests were met with patience.

"How can I stop? Look at this table—every paper calls for an answer. I am the mainspring which keeps all things in order, and cannot at this moment quit my post. You and Lady Hamilton are in a similar position: we are all desirous of rest, but determined for no private consideration to give up and betray the trust imposed in us."

For many weeks no dispatches from Lord Grenville or the Marchese Circello had reached Sicily, and Sir William feared they had been sent via the British Ambassador at Vienna and captured by the enemy. On the 19th of April he was much relieved by the arrival of the *Lord St. Vincent*, cutter, bringing a bag from the Foreign Office containing, among official correspondence, a private letter from Messrs. Ross announcing that arrears of salary had been paid up to December 1798.

"To my sorrow I see no mention of anything from my estate, but I am thankful there is something to meet expenses. I had hoped I could settle my debt to you, my dear Nelson, but really I see no chance of it at this moment. I fear to pay away all I have, ignorant as I am what may be piling up against me at Naples. Not one word have I received from Smith since January, and though with General Acton's help I got a letter to my *maitre d'hôtel*, not a line have I had in return. Thus situated, I must remain in your debt a little longer."

"Don't speak of it, pray don't!" cried Lord Nelson in distress. "I have no need of the money—let it remain until convenient."

"I am infinitely obliged. If I must borrow, there is no one, my dear Nelson, to whom I would rather be under an obligation than yourself. Happily my collection of pictures is rare, and its sale will clear my debts."

Sir William postponed opening a thick packet from Downing Street until he had taken his siesta; its contents sent him hurrying to Lord Nelson's cabinet.

"Splendid news! Splendid news!" he shouted as he approached.

Four expectant faces looked up; at one end of a long table Cornelia Knight and Emma translated orders and instructions into Italian, at the other Lord Nelson and John Tyson laboured over official business. Sir William took a chair between the two groups and with the palm of his hand flattened the heavy foolscap sheets.

"This is strictly confidential information, but we're all friends and working for the same cause, so I feel no hesitation in imparting it. In this dispatch of March the 25th I am authorised to inform Their Sicilian Majesties and General Acton that His Britannic Majesty is remitting to Sicily one hundred thousand pounds in specie which will be distributed among different ships of war bound for Lisbon and the Mediterranean. Lord Grenville goes on to say:

"His Majesty does not annex any precise condition to this supply, but His Majesty entertains the fullest confidence that it will be faithfully applied to the objects most interesting to the common cause. The King is desirous of enabling His Sicilian Majesty to make such immediate exertions as may lead to the assembling and arming a force in Calabria to be ready to take advantage of the first moment when the French may be obliged to withdraw their force towards the North of Italy and to reestablish His Sicilian Majesty's Government in the Neapolitan provinces with least possible delay. It is therefore the King's pleasure that you should earnestly endeavour to direct the unremitting attention of His Sicilian Majesty's Ministers to this point, and that you should also converse with Lord Nelson upon it and desire him to use to the same end all the influence which is so justly due to his councils and suggestions."

Dropping the papers, Sir William clasped the table edge with his bony hands, thereby supporting himself while he swung backwards on the hind legs of his chair. "I think you will agree that this subsidy is most satisfactory, and will put us in the way of forcing bolder measures: *Audendo agendoque res publica crescit—non us consilii quæ timidi cauta appellant.*"

"Our Royal Master's goodness is certainly in bright contrast with the misfortunes of inertia prevalent here. The Master of a Greek vessel which came in this morning corroborated the report that the Grand Duke and his family have obeyed an order to quit Tuscany. He could not say whither they had fled, but assured me that the Pope is still alive and has been moved from Certosa and is being taken to France."

"Good God! What beasts they are!" Emma indignantly cried.

"Nothing the Republicans do can shock me," said Nelson. "I've instructed *La Minerve* to go northward for information after landing

her troops at Procida. Since the 24th, when the French took possession of Leghorn, I had no doubt they meant to revolutionize Tuscany—the natural fruit of the conduct of Messieurs Thurgut and Manfredini. By their reluctance to fight the French who now wage war against the Emperor and the Grand Duke, these Ministers are directly guilty of losing both Naples and Tuscany.”

“Come, come, my dear Nelson,” said Sir William in rallying tones. “Prospects here are brighter than ever before—the Cardinal and his victorious army approaching Salerno, all the islands in the Bay of Naples in possession of the gallant Troubridge, and now this munificent gift from His Majesty to forward the good work. Like Emma, here, I say you allow yourself insufficient leisure and recreation—too much application breeds despondency.”

Nelson rose and began to walk back and forth. Slats of sunlight filtering through the Venetian shutters rippled over his swiftly moving figure and struck sharp lights from gold lace and gilded buttons.

“Now England pays for the recovery of King Ferdinando’s dominions, we will again push the point about Malta. And Troubridge must have supplies to keep his islanders from starving. In consequence of the Queen’s promise, he pledged himself that they should want neither grain nor flour, yet nothing has been sent, and Troubridge is obliged to feed the people from a private stock. He believes the Minister of the Interior is holding up supplies in his own interests—having had dealings with Prince Trabia, I can believe it.”

“The Queen would not promise supplies and fail to give the order,” said Emma, warmly defending her royal friend. “Maria Carolina would never play a double game.”

“I am sure she could not!” Nelson answered, with an admiring glance at Emma’s ardent face, “but I cannot feel equal confidence in the Ministers of this Government, and shall not allow another moment to pass without pressing the Court to send provisions. Will you come with me, Sir William?”

Miss Knight looked up from Baretti’s Dictionary. “The King told me he is taking a holiday from affairs of state. I met him early this morning setting out with Prince Jaci to harpoon tunny-fish. His Majesty said very likely they’d sleep in the boat and get more sport to-morrow.”

“Then to Acton we must go again,” Nelson decided with resignation.

"And I'll talk with the Queen," Emma announced, putting her work together. "After leaving you both at Acton's the carriage can take me on to the convent—'tis but a mile beyond the palace."

Ostensibly in retreat to make the spiritual exercise of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Maria Carolina was in fact retreating from a cat-and-dog existence with Ferdinando. Her haven was the convent of the Carmelites on the road to Monreale. Since the flight from Naples disagreements had developed into open strife. Every misfortune that had overtaken the Monarchy His Majesty attributed to former times when his wife held the reins of government.

"You shall meddle no more, woman," he declared in high pitched anger. "*Io sono re padrone.*"

"So God knows what fate has in store for my children," Carolina moaned, "for myself I care not—I have lived too long."

After dropping Lord Nelson and Sir William at General Acton's office in the lower part of the palace, Emma passed through the South Gate on to a rough road mounting between high hedges of prickly pear and aloes. The convent, a large two-storeyed building, was set back on a plateau cut in the hillside. Before it stretched the "*giardino*", a wide expanse covered with pebbles, and barren save for a marble effigy of Santa Teresa mounted on a votive box and carrying a crucifix and dove. Queen Carolina's two whitewashed cells looked upon the garden, the back drapery of the statue, and over the edge of the plateau to Palermo and the sea far below. A chair and table, a bed and a cupboard were the only secular comforts that distinguished the royal *pensonnaire* from the nuns. She was veiled and garbed in purple silk shaped like a Carmelite habit, her feet were bare, in delicate compliment to the Order, but long confinement in court shoes had made the Queen's feet less comely than those which had traversed only the hard road of humility.

She greeted Emma with a cry of pleasure, but in a moment fear qualified the welcome. "Miledi, I hope you don't bring bad news?"

"The very best in the world," Emma hastened to reassure. "Our King George is sending one hundred thousand pounds to set Your Majesties back on the throne of Naples—'tis not a loan, but an out-and-out gift, with no conditions but to spend it on the common cause."

"My prayers are answered," Carolina observed in hushed tones.

Emma looked nettled. "It came as no surprise to us—England is always generous!"

"Yes, yes, I agree!" Carolina answered hastily, "your nation is everything that is admirable, in contrast with this, which daily gives further proof of treason and infamy."

"That is partly why I'm here," Emma replied, with amiable candour. "Prince Trabia hasn't sent the vessels of corn and flour promised to Captain Troubridge, and the poor Maltese face want—Lord Nelson says all the islanders must have abundance, or their allegiance will be lost."

Carolina looked sulky and spoke with asperity: "I can do nothing, Miledi, having no longer any authority. Appeal to the King and Acton!"

"It has been done—but you and I know what use that is! What is needed is money *now* to send supplies. A month hence boatloads of food could serve no purpose, because the islanders will have sold themselves to the French for bread. Give money now, Your Majesty, and save Naples for your children!"

"But I have so little," Carolina almost whimpered. "All told only thirty thousand ducats!"

"Then give twenty-five thousand—spending it on buying a kingdom will serve you better than keeping it in a chest for Jacobins to steal! Besides, you can recover it when the money comes from England."

"I shan't give up more than seven thousand ounces!"

"'Twill be quite enough! 'Tis generous indeed, and so will say Lord Nelson and Sir Will'um—Can you give me an order that we may have the money to-morrow?"

Maria Carolina pattered reluctantly across the stone floor to the cupboard and took therefrom a sheet of paper and an ink-horn. As she wrote she said: "Saverio Rodino keeps the key of my private chest; give this order to him and he will pay out the money. *Mon Dieu!* What a risk I am taking!"

"There's no risk at all!" Emma responded in comfortable assurance. "When Troubridge sent word he had captured the islands in the bay, Lord Nelson declared: 'I almost take upon me to say that in fourteen days His Sicilian Majesty will be in the Bay of Naples and perhaps on his throne!'"

"I confess great hopes, or I would not give up my little fortune upon which my children depend. Captain Troubridge and the Cardinal are accomplishing marvels, but accounts of treacheries render me most unhappy. There seems no doubt that Caracciolo is

head of the marine and has sworn allegiance to the Jacobin Government. I say it with sorrow, but those who served the King—for instance, Caracciolo, Moliterno, Roccaromana and Federici—now fight against us, and deserve the death penalty.”

“Troubridge wrote that Caracciolo was mounting guard as a common sentinel at the palace. It seems the French system of equality obliges everyone to do duty as militia—the Brigadiere, who was always so proud, won’t much relish *that!*”

On returning to Palazzo Palagonia, Emma displayed the Queen’s order and was warmly congratulated. “We met with our usual unsuccess,” Nelson ruefully observed; “all and more than we want is promised *when the money comes from England*, until then the Maltese must feed their hunger on hope!”

The Queen’s generosity again staved off a Maltese capitulation, and from the Bay of Naples dispatches reported continued progress despite treachery and pusillanimity among Neapolitan officers embarked with the British expedition. The sight of English warships encouraged the *lazzaroni* to use their daggers; the French and the Jacobins quarrelled among themselves, and it was dangerous to move about after dark. In the words of Captain Troubridge: “Naples is in the devil of a ferment.” Noblemen grew tired of standing as sentinels and going the rounds, yet feared their fate if the French quitted the city leaving them to the mercy of the mob and the King’s allies; such apprehensions carried no weight with General MacDonald, the French commander who had succeeded Championnet. By the 22nd he had called in all his outposts, and retired to Capua, leaving only five hundred men in the Castle of Saint’ Elmo. The French withdrawal with their sick, plunder and cannon was necessitated by news of defeats in the north and dangers near at hand. The Archduke Charles had forced General Jourdan to recross the Rhine, the Swiss were in revolt, General Serrurier had been defeated and forced to retreat into Mantua. Immediate threats to MacDonald came from the Army of the Holy Faith advancing from Cosenza to the city of Salerno captured by Captain Hood and garrisoned by marines from the *Zealous*, and a party of Royalists.

Captain Troubridge was to judge the right moment for the King to show himself in the Bay of Naples, but upon the plan being revealed, Ferdinando obstinately declined his part in the campaign.

“Not until the Russians arrive!” he said firmly. “My presence would cause an insurrection among my faithful *lazzaroni*, which, if

it did not succeed, might be dangerous for me and for them. I shall wait patiently for the Tsar's troops."

Sir William expected circumstances to effect a modifying influence on the royal mind. "It would be glorious indeed if Their Majesties could be replaced on their throne of Naples without any other aid than that of Great Britain—as we have no certain accounts of the Russian troops, such a happy event may yet take place."

Ferdinando's determination to avoid risks was strengthened by the next account from Naples. Count Thurn, commanding what was left of the marine, reported that his frigate, *La Minerva*, had been fired upon by Don Francesco Caracciolo from a Jacobin gun-boat flying the red, blue and yellow flag of the Parthenopean Republic. Anger convulsed the Court, but Lord Nelson welcomed an act that gave proof of treachery. "Now we know how we stand. Caracciolo was fool enough to quit his Master when he thought his case desperate. Like Troubridge, I should be glad to find him innocent, and 'tis necessary to be satisfied whether he is an unwilling accomplice or a prime mover in villainy."

"There can be no doubt he is a traitor," General Acton declared with brusque finality. "We have it on good authority that he sent for Salvator Guidice, head of the fishermen of Santa Lucia, and ordered him to procure seamen for Jacobin gun-boats. Salvator declared not one would serve, whereupon Caracciolo threatened him. The fishermen met and made a cabal among themselves, vowing that if they prove him *perfidio*, much as he had been beloved by them, he shall be the first to fall when they begin, for every loyalist has his marked man to stiletto."

"I shall certainly await a more favourable opportunity to show myself to my people," the King prudently decided.

Early one morning Nelson called Emma and Sir William to see a fine Swedish barque running into port on a light following wind; every sail was set and gleaming in the strong sunlight.

"As fine a vessel as ever I saw!" Nelson said appreciatively.

"I wonder what she does here," Sir William remarked; "there's no considerable trade between this island and the northern states."

An hour later speculation was answered by the arrival of the Honourable William Frederick Wyndham.

"Are ye the only fugitives?" Sir William inquired, warmly clasping the hand of a brother diplomat.

"On the contrary, we're all flying from revolution! The Court of

Tuscany, the Russian and Portuguese Ministers, even Messieurs Serate and Manfredini!"

"Devil take them!" Nelson ejaculated.

"And the Archduke and Duchess—I suppose they've gone to the palace," Sir William conjectured.

"The French gave them a travelling permit to Austria, but whether it secures their safety through the battle area is another matter. I fear, Sir William, you will be dismayed to learn that I have brought back to your charge all the French and Corsican *émigrés* who are under the pay and protection of Great Britain."

"I am indeed appalled at facing the problem again, the more so as I have occasion to know the great difficulty of getting permission from this Government for any French emigrants to come on shore, their nationality being universally detested in this island."

Sir William found the obstacles put in his way even more numerous than when, at New Year, he attempted to land the refugees. Though he felt ill and weak, he doggedly went from the Prætorian Court to the Senate; thence to the Chancellor, who referred him back to *Il Maestro Portulano*, who would only transact business at six o'clock in the morning. Consequently Sir William was not present when Emma came to breakfast on her birthday. Mrs. Cadogan gave her a hearty hug, Lord Nelson and Lieutenant Tyson kissed her hands and wished her happy.

"This evening there is to be a ball and supper on board the *Vanguard*, may I request the honour of your company?"

"A ball for me? How wonderful—and I never guessed! How can I thank you for such a surprise? 'Twill give me greater pleasure than anything I can think of, for you know how dearly I love to dance! Thank you, thank you a thousand times!"

"And here's your gown, Emma dear!" said Mrs. Cadogan, producing a dress from the back of a chair. "I could wish it was better, I'm sure, but you know I'm a poor body in these days, so you must pretend a bit of worked muslin is cloth of gold, as I wish it was, bachel!"

Emma lifted the embroidered skirt and examined the fine stitching. "Poppies and green corn, like those that grow in the fields at Hawarden. It must have took you hours—that's why you said you liked sitting alone in your room! Oh, Mam, you are too good to me! Everyone is too kind—I don't deserve such goodness, I don't indeed!" Emma's lovely eyes brimmed over with facile tears.

Later in the morning, she and Lord Nelson were alone, working at opposite sides of a long table. Rising abruptly, he came to her side carrying a packet in his hand.

"Another present? But indeed you should not! A ball to-night and shawls for my attitudes when Mr. Smith sends them!" As she spoke she split the wafers to discover a bundle of English bank notes. Emma gasped. "I've never seen so much money—not all at one time! But my dear generous Nelson, I can't take it! See! I roll them up again! Though I must give them back, I'll thank you for the thought to my dying day!"

The light faded from Nelson's face as she thrust the packet into his hand. "Then you don't like me well enough to take my gift," he said in a toneless voice. "I hoped we were friends—real friends. Able to share if one had something that the other needed. I see I was wrong—but never mind!" Listlessly he walked to his end of the table and sat down, casting the packet of notes into a box beside him. Taking a sheet of paper, he began to draft a letter to the British Consul at Corfu.

Emma sat miserably twisting her handkerchief round her fingers.

After writing a few lines, Nelson uttered a strangled exclamation and dropped his head on his hand. "Sometimes I ask myself what is the good of it all? God knows I am not insensible to the honours and riches my King and country have heaped upon me—so much more than any officer could deserve—yet I am ready to quit this world of trouble, and envy none but those of the estate six feet by two."

"Hush! hush! Don't talk so," whispered Emma, a look of superstitious horror on her face.

"I must unburthen my heart sometimes! Ball has a help-meet and son who glory in his glory; Troubridge has children who will be proud to bear his name. What have I? A good woman to wife, more interested in her dress for a royal birthday and her water-colour painting than in the greatest battle that was ever fought. I always wanted children—now more than ever. Think how proud I should be to give my sword to my son—a second Lord Nelson to fight for the glory of England. But I have only Josiah—Josiah Nisbet, who is often too drunk to manage a ship!"

To Emma's dismay, Nelson began to sob in a hollow, heartbroken way pitiful to hear. In a moment she was round the table to throw a comforting arm about his shoulders. "Do not, please do not weep.

... I never guessed you were so unhappy. . . . I wish I could help you. . . . But there is nothing, nothing I can do. . . ." She accompanied her soft words with soothing pats, her warm breath fanned his cheek.

He sprang up; in a moment she was folded in his arm. His hungry lips pressed kisses on her eyelids and throat, her cheeks and tawny curls. His mouth found hers.

After a long time they separated and looked at each other with bemused eyes. He trembled and his breath came unevenly. "Emma—my dear!"

"'Twas wonderful!" she whispered.

"Let me—just once more!"

When they parted both were spent and white. "If I die this night I shall go to no strange place—for I have been in heaven with an angel!"

"I'll never forget your kisses—never!" Emma declared.

"We shall remember always—but we must never again act so!"

"Never?"

"No, my dearest love, never again! 'Twould not be honourable to Sir William, or to—Fanny. We must be staunch and keep our feelings in check. 'Twill be a new way of fighting, and the victory will be our own subjection; we shall have this moment to remember, and our strength to sustain us!"

"Shall we?"

"Aye—and in a week or two I will find a means to return to the *Vanguard*. Now all that is settled, and you will take this little gift from me to seal the bargain. Please, dear friend—make me happy!"

Emma's fingers closed on the roll of notes "Perhaps I had better not tell Sir Will'um I have accepted such a fortune. I'm sure he'll not approve."

"You must tell him—I would not deceive good Sir William for the world! He will think as I do, that three persons linked together by a tie of differing affections should share for the common weal—*tria juncta in uno*."

To Emma's surprise he exactly interpreted Sir William's view.

"Why should ye feel undeserving of such a gift, my dear Em? Handsome as it is, I regard the sum as no more than ye merit, for ye toil over letters and documents until your back is becoming quite rounded. Who else could Nelson trust to translate confidential papers? Who else would watch his health and guard his comfort?"

Sometimes I think ye are more attentive to him than to me. By the same token will either you or your mother see that my night-shirts are not starched? The one I am wearing is like a board, and I don't sleep so easy in my old age that I can afford unnecessary obstacles put in the way of rest."

During the birthday ball and supper Lord Nelson was as attentive as Emma could wish, but in the days that followed he absented himself from his desk at the Palazzo Palagonia and conducted most of his business from the *Vanguard*. She was not dismayed; though her blood raced wildly, Emma was no longer a young maid ignorant of the tortuous ways of the human heart, nor a blind practitioner in the art of love. She could wait. . . . No translations to be done meant more time for vocal exercises, sadly neglected for affairs of state. . . .

The harpsichord was a poor instrument compared with the one left in Naples for the French to plunder, but her voice was pure and flexible as ever. Blithely she sang:

*"When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight.
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo:
Cuckoo, cuckoo; O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!"*



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE accession of the nobility and Ministry of Tuscany to the overcrowded city of Palermo added to the gay life of the streets and to the discomfort of refugees already in possession. Happily, the weather was hot, and flat roofs could be utilized as sleeping quarters. Fearing that he might be called upon charitably to accommodate fugitives who would disturb his household, Sir William prudently invited Mr. Abraham Gibbs, the banker, and Mr. George Noble, a wealthy merchant of Naples, to occupy the empty rooms in Palazzo Palagonia. Mr. Noble had a wife and a brood of children; to give them more space, Lord Nelson insisted on relinquishing his secretariat and ante-chamber, and Mr. Tyson was ordered to remove to quarters in the *Vanguard*. The arrangement did not please Emma, and she expressed herself forcibly to Sir William.

"There is no use your raging to me, Emma!" he answered testily. "Ye see for yourself that the town is packed to overflowing, and we could not decently keep empty all these rooms. I flatter myself on managing very cleverly. We might have had to *entertain* uncongenial Tuscans, whereas our good friends are glad to pay handsomely for their accommodation. I really know not my present circumstances, but it is clearly necessary for me to avoid running into further expense, and that I have done."

"But why should Nelson, who pays his share, be asked to make way for Mr. Gibbs and the Nobles?"

"My dear Emma, he wasn't asked; it was Nelson's own wish to remove his business to the flagship, on the grounds that it was more convenient to officers entering port. The arrangement should prove beneficial to his health, as 'twill put a stop to nocturnal writing and insure a morning and evening walk—also the company of Noble's children appears to improve his spirits."

Emma was both stricken and provoked by such testimony of resolve. Her emotions were violently agitated, and she felt in no mood for a protracted campaign to overcome the scruples of a too-honourable lover. No qualms disturbed her conscience; in her view Sir William lost the right to demand fidelity when he released himself from marital embraces. In every other way she would be true and faithful, but a nun for evermore she never could or would be. . . .

Deprived for long hours of Lord Nelson's society, Emma solaced herself by withdrawing from company to sit with idle hands while her thoughts roamed in a romantic beatitude. She was convinced that at last she had found the love of her life, the hero she had always sought. They were made for each other. . . . Like two halves of a broken vase, brought from distant places and rejoined after æons of time. . . . 'Twas destined, sure enough. . . . But how bring Nelson to regard their passion as preordained and not as avoidable sin? . . .

Every evening Sir William sat down to cards with his English guests, but Lord Nelson preferred to listen to Emma's songs or to play *Qui est ce* and *pourquoi* with the Noble children. His favourite was Mary Noble, a charming lively child of eight, and, to Emma's jealous fancy, as tenacious as the spines on the prickly pear. Mary perched on the hero's knee and caressed his scarred brow, she walked with him in the morning and waited on the *molo* to meet him at sundown.

"'Tis most amusing to watch them together," Mrs. Noble purred contentedly, "the great man of the age and my little elf—both children at heart!"

Emma, who wished Mary at the devil, began to feel quite ill with chagrin. Pictures from the past flashed into her mind. . . . Sophy Nichol coquetting with Greville in a wainscoted room at Enfield Town. . . . Greville slipping his hand through the neck of Sophy's shift when she lay stricken with fever. . . . Sophy's tear-drenched face at the coach window and her yearning arms held out to Greville. . . . Good God! Must history always be repeated? . . .

Succumbing to a prevailing colic, Emma took to her bed and presently felt too ill to be harassed by phantasm. Nelson sent gifts of fruit and flowers with beseeching messages to "get well quickly and oblige your ever affectionate friend, Nelson"; the Queen wrote letters of gratifying concern and instructions how to use a present of miraculous powder.

On the *festa* of St. Felix de Cantalice Emma was sufficiently recovered to sit on her balcony to watch the procession. A brazen sun beating down from a dazzling arc of blue made the sea sparkle and licked into white irradiance the curving line of the Marina. A mongrel, slinking along the hot pavement, yelped as the stones burnt his paws. In the dappled shade of fruit trees waddled a fat old negress dressed in scarlet; slung on a strap across her arm was a box like an infant's coffin which contained a Madonna blandly gazing through a glass lid. The old woman stopped opposite Palazzo Palagonia and lowered the effigy into a pool of shadow cast by an orange tree; having preserved her waxen stock-in-trade from the cruel sun, she subsided on her haunches to wait for the procession of the *Cappuccini* and to count offerings made to holy charity. Money rolled into the dust from a yellow plush bag; black hands scrabbled the coins into heaps of *grano* and *piccioli*. Miranda de Douro's ebony skin was polished with castor oil; she wore ropes of imitation pearls, a necklace of mock emeralds, and, on her rolling bosom, a framed testimonial from the Queen of Portugal commending to the charitable the negro convent in Lisbon that her *protégée* hoped to found. After totting up her gains, Miranda looked across the *corso* to the white palaces standing above the city wall; catching sight of Emma, a generous patron, she flashed her white teeth and saluted with a pink-palmed hand.

Seeping through the hot air came the hypnotic mutter of *Cappuccini* chanting as they advanced in single file on either side of the Marina. Leaning over the balcony, Emma saw banners and several feather fans on long poles; a prelate under a yellow umbrella lurching in an arm-chair carried shoulder high; a plaster figure of St. Felix; a large platform covered with red brocade on which reposed grisly reminders of the fate in store both for the great and the lowly. Burial was not practised in Palermo; the dead were carried to the Capuchin convent, where, after a requiem mass, the bodies were baked in lime to a secret formula known only to the fraternity. On completion of the process each corpse was clothed in a piece of coarse drab, labelled with an epitaph and hung up on view. Five specimens of the friars' skill sprawled upon the platform; tied together by their middles, they looked, in the hot sunshine and curtsying candle-flames, like a bunch of ancient leather marionettes. Following this load came more *Cappuccini*, banners and ceremonial fans, and finally the crazy Principe di Palagonia, a grey-faced, meagre

figure who, scandalising the devout, danced at the tail of all religious processions.

The show over, Miranda, sucking an orange that had fallen into her lap, took up her image and waddled away. Distance mellowed the harsh jabber of chanting voices; from the bay came sharp creaks as a xebec's brown sail was hauled down. Ponderous footsteps advancing along the pleached alley caused Emma to look to her left. In a few moments Tom Allen emerged through a leafy arch, crossed the *corso*, and ascended the garden stairs. He carried a bunch of white roses, a bottle of wine and a sealed packet. Before he climbed to the topmost terrace Emma had tied her scarf to the handle of her work-basket and lowered it over the balustrade. "Put in the letter and wine, Tom, then I'll let down my scarf for you to tie round the roses!"

"My Lord will be well pleased you're on your feet, Ma'am," Tom said, blinking up with an amiable grin on his round face. "I'm pleased too, for I never saw the Admiral so downcast, not even after Santa Cruz."

"Tell your Master I'll be at supper to-morrow night!"

Emma returned to her couch and, carefully opening the packet, disclosed a note in Mr. Tyson's hand and this letter from Nelson:

"My dear Lady Hamilton,

Tom Allen brings some fresh flowers to replace those I sent yesterday and a bottle of Tokay which I beg you to take as a restorative. I also send a copy of a letter that will amuse you. Our friend Troubridge had a present made to him the other day, of a Jacobin's head, and makes an apology to me, that the weather being so hot he cannot send it here! The French are said to have all evacuated Naples and retired to Caserta and Capua, having robbed all the shops as they passed along. This conduct looks like leaving the Kingdom; the Neapolitan Republic organize their troops, and as yet appear disinclined to yield. I suspect the Royalists wait till the French are out of the Kingdom before they begin to make war. We hear no tidings of the Russian troops by way of Zara. *If* they would arrive the business of Naples would be over in a few hours. The cowardly and treacherous conduct of Marshal Youch has been so infamous, that Troubridge is almost mad with rage and I am in a fever. What a *villain*! Good God! To see shot flying and not taking the post of honour entrusted to him by his gracious master! If an example is not made of this

wretch—for he has not one inch of a man about him—the King will never be well served, for who does not like to live if dishonour is no disgrace?

Between the 5th and 18th of April three or four Frigates and as many Corvettes made their escape from Alexandria—the Swedish Knight having left it on the 7th of March. *I am mad!* But I shall be better when I hear that you are *well*. Ever, ever your affectionate *Nelson*."

Emma kissed the letter fervently before tucking it into her bosom, then she remembered the note. The flimsy sheet had fallen under her chair and she had to go on all fours to find it. The heading was: "A translation of a curious letter sent to Captain T. Troubridge," and addressed: "To the Commandant of the English Ship."

"Sir,

As a faithful subject of my King, Ferdinand IV (whom God preserve) I have the glory of presenting to your Excellency the head of D. Charles Granozio di Giffoni, who was employed in the Administration directed by the infamous commissary, Ferdinand Ruggi. The said Granozio was killed by me in a place called *Li Puggi*, district of Ponte Cagnaro, as he was running away. I beg your Excellency would accept the said head, and consider this operation as a proof of my attachment to the Royal Crown, and I am with due respect, the faithful subject of the King,

Giuseppe Manuiso Vitella.

Salerno, 26th April, 1799."

Emma showed this curious epistle to Sir William when he came to inquire how she did; Nelson's letter she omitted to mention. Sir William raised his brows significantly. "If the report be true of a French retirement there'll soon be bloodshed, the populace of Naples being quite ripe for a counter-revolution. I was at the *Colli* this afternoon with Nelson, and the King told us he has received brilliant accounts of the Austrian armies both in Italy and Germany, and reports of Austrian and Russian troops having driven the French out of Tuscany and taken possession of Leghorn—but this last wants confirmation."

"What of the Sanfedisti? How far have they got?"

"I don't think there is anything very fresh from that quarter—"

the Grand Diable has been on board the *Culloden* to discuss plans for taking Gaeta with his portion of the Christian army, but no news of the event has reached this Court. The King is assured that success is very close, and showed me a list he was drawing up of arrests to be made by the Cardinal on entering the capital. Luigia Sanfelice and Vincenzo Cuoco came first."

"Good God! Whatever can they have done?"

"Details are obscure, but it seems there was a Royalist plot, headed by old Baccher and his sons, to overthrow the French and Jacobins in Naples. Unbeknown to the conspirators, young Gerardo Baccher was Luigia's lover; he told her of the secret preparations and gave her a paper for her protection when the massacre took place. Luigia, however, had another *cicisbeo* in the opposition camp to whom she retailed the plot and even surrendered the *billet de sauve-garde*. Acton says he is one of the Ferri family, owners of that large estate at Sant' Agnello—just above the Villa Guarracino. A Jacobin and a lieutenant in the Parthenopean *Garde Nationale*, he faithfully transmitted the *billet* and all the information to his superior, Vincenzo Cuoco. Luigia was acclaimed the Saviour of the Republic, old Baccher was flung into the Carmine and two of his sons were shot."

"One can hardly believe such baseness!" Emma said in shocked tones. "A husband and two lovers, yet true to none! But there!—we all knew Luigia's character when she was banished from Naples."

Nelson planned to celebrate Emma's recovery by a Sunday excursion along the coast towards Capo di Gallo. They were to set forth in the cool of the morning and land for breakfast at some pleasant spot. Emma, who had her own ideas how the day should be spent, lay awake picturing the hours ahead; when light began to trickle between the shutter slats she sprang out of bed to see if mist betokened a *sciocco*. The weather was beautifully clear, clouds like feathers from a flamingo's wing drifted across the turquoise sky and were reflected in the folds of a nebulous grey sea. A brig, under a press of sail, slowly moved towards the harbour. A white pendant floated and fluttered at the main; a waft, made from a red ensign rolled up and tied to resemble a Bologna sausage, was hoisted at the peak. Sunrise tinted her sails a rosy pink and dappled with orange and gold the water disturbed by her passage. Enchanted by the charming scene, Emma half leant, half reclined upon the balcony's broad balustrade. From the terraced garden floated scents of jasmine and oleander; rainbows danced in the fountain tossing above the

curve of marble stairs; a white peacock minced from the belvedere and unfurled an etiolated tail to the rising sun.

Crisp footsteps in the portico caused Emma to look down just as Lord Nelson emerged between the pillars. Grasping the marble coping, she leant still farther from the balcony. "Nelson! Nelson! Where are you going? Have you forgot 'tis Sunday—the day of our water picnic?"

Turning sharply, he looked up, shading his eyes. "Can you believe I would forget? I never slept all night, thinking of my holiday, and vow nothing shall rob me of it but the most extraordinary circumstances. I shall be gone but an hour, and be back in time to set out when we planned. But the brig just coming in has hoisted a waft, a signal only made when a ship has urgent reason to speak with her Admiral."

"A messenger will be sent up!"

"Business can be transacted much quicker if I'm in the port to receive the brig's commander. Have no fear; only the King's service shall keep me one moment from your side." Waving gaily, he turned towards the steps; Emma watched his slight active figure descending the first flight and cross the second terrace, thereafter she lost sight of him until he reappeared on the *corso* and stopped again to wave.

Seven, eight, nine o'clock passed; Sir William, telescope to eye, scrutinized the triangle upon which the Marina, Porta Felice and the mole converged.

"Let's walk along and see what keeps him," said Emma, in a fever of impatience. "If 'tis bad news I'd rather know it than sit on tenterhooks like this."

"I think ye will not be teased much longer, for I see William Faddy coming along at a great rate which is not much interrupted by leaping over each statue that stands in his path."

In a trice Emma crossed the balcony and vanished through the long window; her voice floated back from the shadowy room: "I'm going to meet Will'um."

It seemed but a moment later that she was running to embrace the perspiring, red-faced boy. "Have you come from Milord?"

Removing his hat, William produced therefrom a note so damp that the wafers were peeling off. "There ye are, Emma, and mind ye don't tell that I've got it so messed. Now I've to go back and leave ye, my love," he said, with a saucy wink. In a small cracked voice he began to sing:

*"See their tri-coloured ensigns we view from afar,
With three cheers they are welcomed by each British tar!
Whilst the genius of Britain still bids us advance,
And our guns hurl in thunder defiance to France."*

"What do you mean, Will'um?"

"Why, just this, Emma dear! The brig *L'Espoir* has brought news of the Frenchies having been seen off Oporto heading for this sea, so off we shall go to meet them and give them another drubbing."

"Good God! How many ships are there?"

"I dunno!" William responded nonchalantly. "But the *Vanguard* alone is equal to five enemy Ships of the Line—sweet Emma, I must really bid ye adieu!"

As his running footsteps diminished into the distance, Emma slowly mounted from one terrace to the other, reading Nelson's letter as she climbed.

"Nothing but duty could keep me from you on this day we planned to spend in company. Commander James Sanders of the *Espoir* brings important intelligence of the French Fleet, of nineteen Sail of the Line having before this joined the Spanish Fleet, of twenty-five Sail of the Line at Cadiz. What the event of Lord Keith's action may be before they get in, time only can discover. Lord St. Vincent comes up the Mediterranean to join his detached Squadrons. No time must be lost and I am making all preparations to gather my force together. If you and good Sir William can come on board in the late afternoon we can discuss events; will you, my dear friend, arrange a visit to the Queen so that I may tell her what goes forward? Ever your obliged and affectionate *Nelson*."

Sir William's face grew longer as his eyes scanned the straggling writing. "This armada is formidable indeed! Nelson expected the French would try to recover the naval power he shattered by the Battle of the Nile, but he could have formed no conception of the effort they would make. The situation is perilous, even though our hero courts battle, and wins, when trebly outnumbered."

King Ferdinando was tunny-fishing from La Favorita, a town near the sea, twenty-four hours' journey from Palermo.

"A good job he is out of the way," Emma commented; "now the Queen will be able to direct all; her noddle is worth a dozen *King's* heads!"

She lost no time in sending a message to the palace; Carolina in return made an appointment for one hour of the night by Sicilian time. As the morning wore on, Emma's initial excitement was succeeded by stark dismay. Glory had another aspect—death. Next time the laurel crown might be hidden under a shroud of cypress. . . . Nothing but a memory would be left of Nelson. . . . Fanny would dress herself in widow's weeds. . . . Fanny was a privileged being. . . . The hero's wife who had shared his bed. . . .

The thought was insupportable! Emma began to walk frantically up and down. Wildly she tore at the bosom of her gown, and ripped the fillet from her hair. Good God! How was it to be borne? . . . Poor Emma, doomed to see her love go to battle; twice doomed that he went a stranger. . . .

Throwing herself on the floor beside her bed, she sobbed and moaned, luxuriating in wild manifestations of woe. But crying did not agree with her constitution, soon she felt sick and faint and her head throbbed. She dragged herself from the marble pavement to the bed without experiencing much benefit; stabs of pain shot through her temples and like lightning flickered in zigzags to her toes.

"My dear Em, another of your attacks?" Sir William commiserated, poking his brown, lantern-jawed face through the mosquito curtains. "Ye should not yield so much to emotion; by developing a philosophical outlook your health would be much better."

"I shan't be able to go with you to the *Vanguard* or to the palace," she moaned.

"In that case, my dear, I will dine with General Acton, and discover how he views this new Franco-Spanish threat to Sicily."

Throughout the sultry hours Emma lay flinching from the light filtering through the shutters, but after the sun dropped behind Monte Pellegrino, she sank into deep, refreshing sleep. Moonlight, streaming into the room, awakened her. Windows and shutters were wide open; a track of liquid gold stretched from the balcony to the horizon. High tenor voices floated to the shore from a fleet of fishing-boats gently rocking on the dappled water; Sir William's milch ass brayed in the stables; bells and the staccato beat of hoofs approached from Porta Felice. Emma sprang out of bed and hastily scrambled into fresh muslin clothes that Giulia had laid out for the morrow. In a mirror she saw herself etherealised by the ashen light, a beautiful ghost with sorrowful violet eyes.

Sir William's carriage stopped with a tinkle of bells at the garden gate; one of the running footmen let down the steps, the other five lined up to yell at the top of their voices: "*Torcie! Torcie! Torcie!*" Gaetano, carrying a pair of flambeaux high above his head, hastened from the portico and descended the garden stairs. He vanished behind the balustrade, but the flaming plumes floated eerily through the dead-white light of the moon.

Down on the Marina Sir William faced about for greater safety, and stuffily descended the high steps of his carriage; Nelson, a slight agile figure overburdened by a large semicircular hat, followed him. From her balcony Emma watched Britain's Minister and Britain's hero climb the first flight of stairs into the orange glare of Gaetano's torches.

Nelson's nasal tones sounded above the splash of the fountain: "Acton's report that a Ship of the Line is frequently seen off Ustica is a fairy tale. I simply do not believe it."

"A canard invariably receives a more favourable reception than the unspectacular truth," Sir William returned in a weary voice.

Emma waited to hear footsteps in the gallery before opening her door. She crossed the threshold of Sir William's room, her hands eagerly extended, a smile of welcome curving her lovely lips.

"My dearest Lord, what news you sent us! All the horrid implications were too much for me, and I was quite undone."

Sir William indulgently patted Emma's shoulder. "I left her low-spirited and unwell, tormented by phantoms in her fertile brain. Emma has no other fault than that of too much *sensibility*, and that at least is a fault on the right side."

She answered indignantly: "I won't be teased, Sir Will'um! Forty-four Ships of the Line are more than five to one against our squadron, and if that is not danger, I don't know what is! See, even Nelson looks pale and anxious!"

"My dear, we are just come from the Queen, who is quite distracted by the turn of events."

"We have been through a terrible scene," said Nelson in explanation of his worn appearance. "Nothing could console Her Majesty this night but my promise not to leave them unless the battle was to be fought off Sardinia. The Queen went on her knees to me: Lady Hamilton, what could I do but declare my determination never to abandon the faithful Allies of our Sovereign? My heart is warm, my head is firm, but my body is unequal to my wishes. I am visibly shook:

but so long as I can hold out, I shall never abandon my truly honourable post."

Emma responded with hearty reassurance: "You did all that a noble heart could dictate."

Walking feverishly up and down, as if trying to overtake his anguished thoughts, Nelson said: "Eight, nine or ten Sail of the Line will be ready in a few days off Mahon to obey the Commander-in-Chief's orders—but I cannot move to his help, as this island appears to hang on my stay!"

Sir William, longing for his bed, suppressed a sigh and solaced himself with snuff. "My dear Nelson, ye should not disturb yourself over what course to take. Your duty was precisely defined by the Secretary of the Admiralty in the dispatch of last October, and on March the 2nd in my instructions from Lord Grenville. The coasts of Sicily, Naples and the Adriatic are clearly regarded as your primary responsibility."

"Yet my heart will break if there is a battle and I cannot assist Lord St. Vincent at such a time. What a state I am in! If I go, I risk, and more than risk, Sicily, and what is now safe on the Continent; for we know from experience that more depends on *opinion* than on acts themselves."

Rising purposefully, Sir William crossed to a gilded console and gustily blew out five candles burning in a silver candelabrum. "Sleep will solve, or at least reduce the complexity of our problems," he remarked. "Let us make ourselves as comfortable in bed as we can, and 'banish sorrow till to-morrow', as the poet advises."

Emma followed Sir William's counsel and slept soundly long after her usual hour of rising. To her dismay, she learned that Nelson had left the palazzo at dawn, not to return. His open door revealed Tom Allen packing clothes into shabby sealskin portmanteaux.

"What a pity for Milord to sleep in the port—'tis so unhealthy in this hot weather. Persuade him to come back here to-night, Tom," said Emma in her most beguiling manner.

"'Twould be no manner of use—dry land will see His Lordship no more till the Frenchies and the Dons are at the bottom of the ocean."

At noon the *Vanguard* was towed out of the mole into the bay. Emma, watching from the *loggia*, thought the ship about to sail, and ran with her fears to Sir William.

"I fancy nothing of the kind need be apprehended at the moment,"

he reassured, "though *entre nous* I do not anticipate that such a great character will be able to play a passive part. Depend upon it, Nelson will soon sail hence in search of the glory his unparalleled virtues and bravery so well merit."

The Minister's prophecy was verified the next morning by a note scribbled:

Tuesday, 14th May.

"My dear Sir William,

The French Fleet of thirty-five Sail, of which nineteen appear to be of the Line, passed through the Straits' Mouth on the morning of the 5th May. This news reached me last night by a lieutenant of the *Petrel* who came from Carini, the sloop not being able to beat up into this port against the east wind. This very important intelligence alters my plan of sending such Ships as I can collect to Mahon, instead I shall rendezvous with the whole of them off the Island of Maritimo and remain covering Palermo which must be protected to the last. I hope Duckworth will send his Squadron to reinforce me; Ball I can count on to bring the Russians and Turks if they are off Malta. I intend to get ashore this day, if only for an hour, to assure you that I am ever your obliged and affectionate, *Nelson*."

Until the arrival of reinforcements, Nelson could do little but fret and fume at his own impotence. He had already mounted guns brought from Naples in the old batteries on the *molo*, but to satisfy himself that the defences were as efficient as their antiquity and his ingenuity could achieve, he inspected them afresh. Easterly winds that had prevailed throughout the week rose to a gale in the early hours of Friday morning; the *Vanguard* and the Portuguese flagship were forced again to take shelter inside the mole. During the afternoon three ships, with their topmasts and yards down, could be seen standing off and on through the scudding mist. Their appearance created panic at Court until word came from Lord Nelson that the vessels were the *Culloden*, *Swiftsure* and *São Sebastião*.

"Ah," said Ferdinando, "now we can begin to feel safer!"

"Safer?" shouted his consort. "Safer? How can five ships of the second class oppose the approaching *gallispana* of thirty-five? We know the size of Spanish ships! Even the hero Nelson, to whom miracles are possible, cannot sink so many."

In the forenoon of the 18th the wind modulated sufficiently to

allow the *Culloden's* barge to reach the port. Nelson and Troubridge dined together, and later went ashore to visit the British Minister. Sir William, prostrate after an attack of biliousness, hospitably uprose to welcome his gallant friends.

"My dear Nelson! My dear Troubridge! This is indeed a pleasure, and puts new life into me. I must send a lackey to fetch Emma—I should not be forgiven if she missed this happy occasion! She is with Miss Knight, whose mother is slowly dying."

"Very sorry to hear it," Captain Troubridge responded, with hearty inattention.

"*Mors omnibus communis.*" By a gesture Sir William dismissed the subject. Both he and Nelson appeared additionally fragile beside the tall, burly Troubridge, whose good-natured, indolent bearing so deceptively masked burning energy and unconquerable resolve. His handsome face was red and rough from exposure, his hair was clipped short at the back and carelessly parted, neither coat, waistcoat nor breeches fitted snugly, but all displayed the wearer's talent for fine darning.

Sir William offered his guests snuff from his diamond-and-gold box, a gift from the Tsar when Grand Duke of Russia. "My dear Troubridge, this new threat by the French Republic is a cruel turn of fate, and hits none harder than yourself. The next few days would have crowned your exertions with success and restored the throne of Naples to Their Sicilian Majesties. What steps were ye able to take for the protection of the Royalists who came out into the open?"

"Captain Foote of the *Seahorse* is in command, but unfortunately he was off Salerno, trying to recover the marines of the *Zealous*, when the *Culloden* had to sail in such haste. I had to rely on *La Minerva* and the *Perseus* bomb to protect the islands in the bay. This gave me great uneasiness, as Caracciolo is gathering together a force of *tartans*, mortar vessels, gun-boats and armed launches, with the avowed intention of recovering the islands—a hundred gun-boats are being built to drive us away!"

"Then there's no doubt Caracciolo has thrown in his lot with the Jacobins?"

"None at all! I intercepted a letter which proved his guilt conclusively. He also went with his gun-boats to Castel-à-Mare and spirited up his rebel friends. The treachery of the whole lot fairly did me up. As for Marshal Yauch, I desired him and all his cowardly gang to get out of a British man-of-war, and told him that in my

opinion the King would never do well until he hanged half of his officers. I hope His Majesty has ordered a court martial to try this Neapolitan General? ”

“ Sir John Acton assured Lord Nelson and myself that the Marshal is to be tried and will be made an example of,” said the Envoy, adding, with a whimsical look: “ But from observations of Neapolitan justice, made over a period of thirty-five years, I do not expect anything but half-measures, which have been the curse of this Government in all its dealings. I constantly remind the King and his Ministers of Pontano’s salutary advice: ‘ By daring and doing the Republic grows, not by those counsels which timid folk call caution.’ ”

Lord Nelson, until this moment preoccupied and silent, brightened up on hearing Emma’s voice calling as she ran up the marble staircase. He went to meet her and leant over the balustrade.

“ You should have sent word you were coming,” she said, with a look of reproach in her lovely eyes; “ suppose I had missed you! ”

“ Would you have cared? ”

“ Good God! *Would I have cared?* Indeed, I will not tell you how much! ”

Nelson took her arm and drew her into the *loggia*; through the open door of Sir William’s cabinet came the sound of his voice conversing with Captain Troubridge.

“ They will not miss us,” Nelson whispered. “ Dear Troubridge is seething with indignation at the perfidy he has encountered at Naples, and ’twill take some time to relieve his feelings. That time we will steal for ourselves—to-morrow I put to sea and proceed to Maritimo to wait for Ball and his squadron.”

“ Would to God you had a larger fleet! ”

“ If Duckworth joins me, as I trust he will, I reckon to be fifteen or sixteen Ships of the Line, the greater part of them the best-ordered ships that ever went to sea.”

“ But not a sufficient force to meet the ‘ *gallispana* ’, as the Queen calls the fleet of France and Spain.”

“ You may depend upon it that the enemy will have their wings so completely clipped before we are destroyed that they may be easily overtaken by Lord St. Vincent—the squadron under my command shall never fall into the hands of the enemy! ”

Emma went white, swayed, and clutched at the balustrade. Nelson quickly caught and held her in the crook of his arm.

“ Lady Hamilton—Emma—please! I cannot bear to see you suffer

on my account. Would you send me away with a faint heart? Would you have me avoid a battle because the enemy boast more ships?"

Emma drew away and stood proudly with her head erect. "No, a thousand times no!" Colour rushed back into her cheeks, her voice gained strength and rang like a clarion summoning the brave to battle. "I would have you meet the enemy with flags flying and bands playing. I would have you act as at the Battle of St. Vincent—board one enemy ship from the deck of another. In short, I would have you be true to the great, glorious Nelson!"

His face reflected her excitement. Admiration, pride and valour showed in his eyes and in the half-smile on his lips. "You spur me on! Like a guardian angel, you stand pointing the way to fame and glory." Taking a step forward, he raised her hand to his lips. "Mildred—Emma—will you give me one real kiss—to remember in the hour of battle?"

Emma drooped her lovely head. "I'd give you more than that!"

"Alas! Honour forbids my taking more."

On learning that the *Vanguard* would not put to sea until afternoon on the following day, Sir William desired Lord Nelson to remain for the night and repair on board early in the morning.

"Troubridge, whom I see cannot be persuaded to sleep ashore, will tell Captain Hardy when he embarks from the mole. Do, my dear Nelson, remain here with your friends! I can lend all you need, Mrs. Cadogan will rejoice to look after your comfort, and Emma will perform her attitudes and sing your favourite song: '*The Prince, unable to conceal his pain . . .*'"

Nelson hesitated, looked at Troubridge, then his gaze wandered round the bright, handsomely furnished room.

"Do, my dear Lord, say yes!" Emma's tone was sweetly beguiling.

"How much I long to stay—yet I should not!" Again he glanced towards Captain Troubridge.

"Oh, stay!" said that officer, with brusque heartiness. "It will make no difference, Hardy can settle any necessary business." He rose from his chair and picked up his cocked hat lying on the table. "I must away, or I'll never get back on board this night. I'll get a message to Hardy, telling him not to expect you until after breakfast."

The trio went to the garden gate to speed the parting guest. "What a fine fellow!" said Sir William, watching Captain Troubridge striding towards Porta Felice. "He is justly incensed at the treachery he

met with at Naples, and passed harsh strictures on Marshal Micheroux."

"That officer has no honour at stake," said Nelson scornfully, "having lost it when he ran away at Toulon, and his *reputation* I should imagine got shattered for ever with Mack's *plus belle Armée d'Europe*."

"In this country such breaks are quickly forgotten," Sir William observed. "If Ruffo captures Naples we shall probably see Micheroux given a place of trust."

"I should be glad to hear what the other Micheroux is doing at Corfu. It is nearly seven weeks since the Chevalier was sent to hasten the embarkation of Hermann's Russians at Zara. *If* they come, such numbers would be useful, but I confess to hating the Russians, and their Admiral at Corfu is a blackguard."

"Usciakoff?"

"Aye—but I look on all Russians as contortionists."

Despite short notice, forty guests assembled at Palazzo Palagonia to coast Nelson and the British Fleet, applaud Emma's performance, and to eat a supper of Mrs. Cadogan's ordering. At two o'clock on Sunday morning the party broke up singing *Rule Britannia*, led by Emma, draped in the Union Jack.

Sir William's strict observance of his duties as host frustrated all Emma's scheming. The Minister was first at the breakfast table and, feeling well, was in the mood for reminiscences. His stories dealt with murders by *aqua tophania* perpetrated with impunity by the nobility of Naples during his long tenure as British Minister. He excelled as a *raconteur*, and the stories were curious and dramatic; Nelson was enthralled, and Emma felt herself forgotten. Chagrined and verging on tears, she left her place at table for the balcony and stood with her back to the room.

Sir William's voice followed her: "As ye believe in the supernatural, Nelson, ye'll be interested in the apparition of the Chevalier de Saxe, uncle of the Queen's favourite, which was called up by the necromancer Schrepfer, and couldn't be induced to go back to the shades. . . ."

Emma heard a chair scrape on the marble floor and Nelson's voice: "There is nothing I would like so well to hear, but alas, time passes, and the enemy will not wait my pleasure. . . . Duty, not my inclination, sends me hence."

"My dear Nelson, ye must forgive an old man's garrulity. Emma!" Sir William raised his voice. "Is the carriage waiting?"

"This great while!"

"Then I'll go and get my hat and cane—are ye coming along to the mole?"

"No, I'll say my farewell here."

Left alone, Nelson and Emma looked at each other, both rendered shy by excess of emotion. "God keep you and send you victorious!" In her own ears her voice sounded puny and cracked, a tiny call flung across a wide gulf that suddenly yawned at their feet. Glory and death were cold. . . . Those who stood on the brink were withdrawn in a strange twilight vigil. . . . "Come back! Come back! Crowned with laurel!" She shouted defiantly and tried to reach out her arms, but they did not answer her will.

"If I am not successful against the French, I hope I shall not live to see it." He went towards Emma with a jaunty air. "Nelson will be first; who can stop him?"

From the threshold of the room, Sir William's tired voice came like an echo: "*Aut Cæsar aut nullus.*"

With the disappearance of the warships over the horizon, Palermo lost all feeling of security. A sense of tension prevailed; people sought each other's company and found it necessary to look out to sea many times in the course of the day for enemy sails. On Monday morning the courier-boat brought a letter to Emma written on the previous night.

"To tell you how dreary and uncomfortable the *Vanguard* appears is only telling you what it is to go from the pleasantest society to a solitary cell; or from the dearest friends to no friends. I am now perfectly the *great man*—not a creature near me. From my heart I wish myself the little man again! You, and good Sir William, have spoiled me for any place but with you. I love Mrs. Cadogan. You cannot conceive what I feel, when I call you all to my remembrance. Even to Mira, do not forget your faithful and affectionate *Nelson*."

"Indeed I love our hero just as much as he loves me," said Mrs. Cadogan, much touched by the message. "Fancy him thinking of a poor serving-wench, and Mira does her work so ill!"

Letters to Nelson from officers under his command were to be opened by Sir William, and accounts from Naples given to King

Ferdinando and his Government before re-despatch by courier-boat. Count Thurn was also in communication with Their Sicilian Majesties, and lost no time in reporting an attack by Caracciolo upon allied ships off Procida, during which most of the fire had been directed at *La Minerva*. Emma had the story from the Queen.

"Now we know exactly how we stand; Caracciolo concentrated his spite upon the frigate he once commanded. Could infamy go deeper? *La Minerva* received two shots through her masts; two seamen were killed and four severely wounded. Our force consisted only of *La Minerva*, five gun-boats, two mortar vessels and the English bomb-ship *Perseus*; Caracciolo attacked for two hours with a fleet of twenty-three well-armed *tartans*, mortar vessels and gun-boats. I understand he waits an auspicious moment to renew his onslaught, reinforced with five more large *tartans*."

"My God! What a traitor! Hanging would be too good for him!"

"So I think!" said Carolina. "It gives me great disquiet that punishment seems to have no part in Cardinal Ruffo's plans for restoring order in Naples. He advocates dissembling and forgetting, or even of giving rewards for the purpose of winning over the chiefs of the rogues. Mercy, pardon and rewards would not inspire feelings of gratitude in a nation so cowardly, corrupt and selfish as ours. I do not hold this view from any spirit of revenge—that is a passion unknown to me."

Emma nodded sympathetically. "Lord Nelson preaches that punishments *and* rewards are the foundation of good government, but the certainty of retribution must be impressed on all."

"How right in all things is the great hero! My thoughts and wishes are with him; believe me, I feel for the affliction you must experience. Yesterday I kept you company having fever and pains in my head. Have you any news?"

"Not much. Rear-Admiral Duckworth is not joining Nelson, but waiting for Earl St. Vincent; neither has Captain Ball reached the rendezvous. Milord says: 'Never mind; if I can get my eleven Sail together they shall not hurt me.'"

"*Mon Dieu!* What courage! Alas! I feel the situation is most dangerous, and ourselves on the eve of a very important crisis."

"Lord St. Vincent believes the enemy fleets will separate, the French going to Malta and Alexandria, and the Spaniards to attack Minorca."

Carolina shook her head and said emphatically: "I am sure the

Gallispiana is bound for this island and Naples. The French will repossess themselves of our capital, just when the Cardinal is beginning to triumph. If the enemy is intercepted and beaten by Earl St. Vincent's fleet, or should some other event turn them away, our hero Nelson must be persuaded to go at once to the Bay of Naples. I fear at any moment a Royalist insurrection against the Republican party, which must fail without assistance from a strong fleet."

"From what Troubridge told Sir William, 'twill be a reign of terror when the *lazzaroni* start on the Republicans. Each one has his marked Jacobin to stiletto. We who know the Neapolitans may be sure that many private vendettas will be settled at the same time."

"How right you are, Miledi! I shudder to think of the tortures that will be inflicted, the *bande della Santa Fede* have already shown how fiendish they can be! My dear Emma, I confess to you, and to you alone, my disgust at having to accept aid from some of the vile brigands who lead the Cardinal's Christian Army."

"What does His Majesty think?"

"I am not in his confidence!" Carolina retorted, with bitter asperity. "The King lives with chosen companions at the Colli, I and my family remain here. As you know, my dear Miledi, I was not offered the choice, or I would not be enduring these stifling days in this miserable old palace at the hottest end of the city. Our Viceroys never spent their summers here; they enjoyed sea-breezes at the Colli!"

"Men always take the best," Emma said quickly, and came to a full stop. Thoughtfully she made amendment: "I expect there's one unselfish man to prove the rule!"

"Perhaps, Miledi; I have sought such a one for many years!"

In the society of her friends Emma could thrust into the background fears for Nelson's safety that haunted her sleep and made her days a torment. The squadron off Maritimo was in frequent communication with Palermo; Sir William and Emma were kept informed of events. Frigates and cutters cruised off Cape Corse and Pantellaria but brought no tidings of the enemy nor of Lord St. Vincent's fleet. Early in the morning of May the 29th a letter for Sir William came by *felucca* with this joyful message: "It is calm. . . . I am turning my head towards you. . . ."

Some hours later the *Vanguard* appeared as a blue smudge on the horizon. The breeze was slight and she made little way; to Emma, Sir

William and Mrs. Cadogan, taking turns at the telescope, the ship looked becalmed.

"We will take a galley and row out," the Minister decided. "What can have happened that the *Vanguard* returns alone?"

An hour elapsed before Sir William struck a satisfactory bargain, in the interval the flagship had drawn within half-a-league of the shore. Eight stout rowers soon reduced the distance; Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy could be seen waving handkerchiefs from the quarter-deck. Both officers stood at the entry port as the *Vanguard* hove to and the galley came alongside; in a moment Nelson was down the sea-ladder. "My dear, dear friends—what happiness to see you. How can I thank you for coming out to meet me? But it is like your goodness. Now, can you all manage to get up this miserable ladder? Lieutenant Swiney! Come down and help Sir William Hamilton."

Mrs. Cadogan was the next to climb aboard; waving aside proffered help, she pulled herself up by means of the side-ropes.

Nelson gazed at Emma, ineffable contentment on his face. "In these last anxious days my only solace was thinking of your beauty, but how pale in comparison with the reality was the picture I conjured!"

The British Minister and his ladies had so many friends on board the *Vanguard* that several minutes elapsed before the party made their way to Lord Nelson's quarters.

Emma was the first to enter the great cabin; she recoiled crying: "My God! Am I dreaming?"

A coffin stood upright against the bulkhead behind the Admiral's chair. "A present from Captain Hallowell," Lord Nelson said with pride; "'tis made entirely of wood and iron from a piece of *L'Orient's* mainmast. Look how clever all has been managed! The nails and staples are contrived from the spikes, and the cover is fixed with toggles. Very neat, isn't it?" As he spoke, Nelson swung open the lid to show how well the hinges worked, and thereby revealed a paper pasted to the bottom. Putting his glass to his eye, Sir William thrust in his head and read aloud:

"I do hereby certify that every part of this Coffin is made of the wood and iron of *L'Orient*, most of which was picked up by his Majesty's Ship, under my command, in the Bay of Aboukir. *Swiftsure*. May 23, 1799—Ben. Hallowell.'

God bless my soul!" added Sir William.

Pulling from his pocket a much-creased piece of paper, Nelson said: "Listen to this:

"My Lord,

Herewith I send you a Coffin made from a part of *L'Orient's* Main mast, that when you are tired of this Life, you may be buried in one of your own Trophies—but may that period be far distant, is the sincere wish of your obedient and much obliged servant, *Ben Hallowell.*'

I verily believe no one but Hallowell would have thought of such a gift, and I declare none could give me more satisfaction." He paused, chuckling to himself. "When the coffin came alongside, one of my boat's crew who came with me from the *Agamemnon* expressed the opinion: 'We shall have hot work of it indeed; you see, the Admiral intends to fight till he is killed, and there he is to be buried.'"

Emma looked white and dismayed; Mrs. Cadogan was indignant and expressed herself forcibly: "Shocked indeed I am at Captain Hallowell, more wisdom I should have thought he had than to tempt providence in such a way!"

Sir William agreed: "Certainly it calls for an undaunted mind to accept a coffin as an agreeable presentation."

The *Vanguard* anchored in the bay in a line with Palazzo Palagonia. Sir William, Emma and Mrs. Cadogan landed immediately; two hours elapsed before the Admiral and John Tyson came ashore. After supper they all sat on the *loggia* enjoying a cool breeze that sprang up after sunset.

Nelson sighed contentedly. "How peaceful! I have not known what sleep is since I left Palermo; and I may say with truth that I have never been free from headache and sickness. To fight is nothing, but to be continually on the stretch for news and events of the greatest importance is what I find my shattered carcase very unequal to."

"I can assure you that we have shared your anxiety," Sir William replied. "Emma was prostrated many days, and it has called for much vigilance on my part to preserve an equable mind."

"I know—if we do not hear from our friends we fancy ten thousand things. To say the truth, had I guessed at Admiral Duckworth's intention not to come to my help, I had no great business at sea, but, being out, I knew that if I returned the next day all Palermo would

fancy I wanted to find shelter and that the French fleet were at my heels."

During the following day the only vessel to reach port was the frigate *Emerald*; the remainder of Lord Nelson's squadron lay becalmed somewhere in the blue haze beyond the horizon. On Friday ships arrived one after the other; at dawn on the 1st of June seven Sail of the Line and several frigates were assembled in the roadstead. Palazzo Palagonia became the rendezvous for every officer in the squadron; messengers came and went; all was bustle and animation. Meals were served at all times, and Sir William's stock of wine diminished alarmingly. Emma resumed her post as interpreter; as work increased Mrs. Græffer was enlisted to translate correspondence. Carry was completely mistress of the Italian tongue, but she was a poor substitute for the erudite authoress of *Dinarbas* and *Marcus Flaminius*—Cornelia Knight nursed her mother, who was not expected to survive the summer.

Emma's sympathies were with her friend, whose path of duty was dull and often thorny: "On Corri's account I was as glad as she could be to see the *Audacious* come in on Saturday. Surely Captain Could will make an offer now he's on the spot?"

"I've done all I could to spur him on," Nelson responded, "and in my opinion the good, charming Miss Knight is more amiable than ever by her kind attentions to her mother."

Sir William felt under an obligation to celebrate his Royal Master's official birthday with a banquet and ball, in accordance with the precedent established at Naples, but neither his present house nor his purse lent themselves to hospitality in the former grand style. At Lord Nelson's suggestion Sir William consented to share the pleasant duty, Palazzo Palagonia being the scene of the banquet and the *Vanguard* the setting for a fête and ball. All was arranged when the Admiral's part of the programme was upset by King Ferdinando's wish to give a fête and illuminations at the palace as a public demonstration of his gratitude and attachment to *il Re d'Inghilterra*.

The 4th of June was hot and brilliant; a cloudless azure sky made a vivid background for British and Portuguese ships-of-war decked with colours and drawn up in Line of Battle opposite the city. At noon a royal salute was fired and returned in thunderous echo by the encircling mountains; at three o'clock the principal officers of the squadron assembled round Sir William's table. Royal healths were drunk and an incredible number of glasses broken; Emma sang Miss

Knight's version of the National Anthem, and performed her attitudes with the aid of two beautiful Indian shawls, just arrived in a corvette from Constantinople.

"The other pair are yet to come," Lord Nelson said as he presented them; "'tis nearly three months since I asked Mr. Spencer Smith to oblige me; I think I might have managed quicker through an ordinary merchant. But never mind!"

At the fête the King and Queen stifled mutual animosity in the cause of hospitality and a common purpose. Even in retrospect the royal entertainment showed no flaw, as Sir William declared: "Nothing could exceed the brilliancy of the fête nor the abundance of refreshments except the very particular attentions that Their Sicilian Majesties and the royal family were pleased to show to every one of their British guests."

Absence of news from the western Mediterranean continued to keep Lord Nelson keyed up to a state of nervous tension; he worked feverishly to get all ships in the squadron provisioned for six months and in momentary readiness to meet the enemy. But, due to the more favourable aspect of affairs in Italy and to the knowledge that his squadron was ready to act, he did not expect a French attack upon Sicily. Under the command of Field-Marshal Suvárov, the Imperial troops charging westward from Verona were driving back the French; as a consequence, the enemy were vacating Rome. Rumours of Austro-Russian successes reached Palermo, but no official announcements came from Vienna. In Calabria the Sanfedisti advanced upon Naples, where four hundred French troops remained in Castel Sant' Elmo. Cardinal Ruffo reported that Russian frigates had landed a few men at Brindisi; there was no information respecting the nine thousand auxiliary Russian troops promised to the King of Naples by the Emperor Paul, nor was there any news of the three thousand Grenadiers intended for the garrison of Malta. Neither the Queen nor General Acton pinned any hopes upon this source of supply, and urged Ferdinando to rely upon his own resources for the recovery of the capital. The moment had never appeared so propitious; the only obstacle to the encirclement of Naples was the uncertainty of Nelson's position. The King inclined to the views of his advisors, stipulating only that he should not be invited to take an active part in the enterprise until it was *un fait accompli*.

"Very well," muttered Carolina through lips twisted into a scornful

smile, "Francis shall go, subordinate in everything but rank to Milord Nelson."

Ferdinando was quite agreeable: he envied no one the prestige of commanding in battle. Many councils were held at the Palace and at the Colli; the views of the Court were presented to Lord Nelson and the British Minister.

Carolina pleaded with Emma to exert her influence. "Miledi, if the *Gallispans* enters the Bay of Naples, new vigour will be instilled into our infamous rebel subjects. The Royalists only wait a signal to rise against the Jacobins and such of the vile French as remain in the fortresses. We have it on good authority that many of the worst rebels have fled to France; deserted by their chiefs, the others show the greatest apprehension. If our valorous Admiral would appear with his squadron off the port, there can be no doubt that the misguided 'Republicans' would submit to their lawful Sovereign."

Lord Nelson found himself in a harassing position. The arguments were sound, and corresponded with his inclination, but he hesitated to relinquish the strategic advantages of Palermo, which secured Sicily and was far nearer to Minorca than was Naples if a summons came to join the Commander-in-Chief.

Rear-Admiral Duckworth's unexpected and welcome arrival with the *Foudroyant* and three 74's caused Nelson to incline a more favourable ear to the appeals of the Neapolitan Court. Duckworth brought intelligence of the enemy, also a disquieting report of Lord St. Vincent's intention to give up his command on account of ill health. This possible misfortune shook Lord Nelson far more than any threat by a trebly strong enemy fleet.

"For the sake of our country, I hope he will not quit us at this serious moment. I wish not to detract from the merit of whoever may be his successor, but it must take a length of time to be in any manner a St. Vincent."

News of the enemy was more satisfactory. Running into a storm off the coast near Oran on the 16th and 17th of May, the Spanish fleet had sustained damage which effectually crippled their force and precluded any immediate collaboration in French ambitions.

Two hours after his arrival Emma presented Admiral Duckworth to the Queen, at Her Majesty's express wish. The audience took place at the Carmelite convent, whither Maria Carolina had gone for fresh air. She was extremely gracious, and flattered the Admiral by assum-

ing that his arrival insured a speedy restoration of Naples to the Monarchy. Her arguments, reiterated by Emma on the homeward drive, had their effect, and at supper he was firmly in favour of employing sea-power to end the Parthenopean Republic.

"Let us have a dart at it," he said; "the sight of the squadron would allow this warlike Cardinal to finish his business quickly and leave you free, My Lord, for more important matters. If the Franco-Spanish fleet comes this way, we shall be in plenty of time to meet it."

Nelson listened. Presently he answered: "I'll think of it!"

On the 8th of June he shifted his flag to the *Foudroyant*; Captain Hardy and several officers and men moved with him. After her arduous service the *Vanguard* was rotten and unseaworthy; the change to a fine 80-gun ship pleased everyone. For two days Emma and Sir William enjoyed little of the Admiral's company, but they had plenty of excitement. News from the Royalist army was of an encouraging nature: Cardinal Ruffo was advanced to within twelve miles of the capital; the Grand Diavolo, with his army of brigands from Abruzzo, had cut off all communication between Rome and Naples and destroyed the aqueducts that supplied the city. A general attack was planned to take place on the 17th. Lord Nelson consented to show the squadron in the bay and to transport thither seventeen thousand Sicilian troops and a small train of artillery.

"At the head of this force I have placed the Hereditary Prince," Ferdinando said complacently; "the present circumstances of this Kingdom and of my family prevent me from leaving them, thus, Milord Nelson, I trust to your friendly assistance to guide my son's first steps in the present critical career which he will have to pursue. I request you to give him your wise advice but always to act principally, as your forces are the true means and support on which I rest my future hopes."

The Prince Royal showed a stubborn reluctance to assume the rôle assigned to him, and Lord Nelson still hesitated to risk damage to the squadron while such a formidable enemy fleet was in the Mediterranean. At the eleventh hour it appeared to the Queen that neither the English hero nor her son was going to play their allotted parts. She sent for Emma.

"All is lost, Miledi, if the expedition does not sail to-morrow. My dear friend, tell our valorous Admiral that you and the worthy Chevalier will go with him."

Emma's eyes sparkled and her colour rose. "'Tis an ideal!"

Returning home as fast as horses could take her, she propounded the scheme to Sir William.

"The plan has points, Emma; but of course it would be quite impossible for you to go in a ship crammed with troops. I really think, though, that I should be of some service. 'Tis difficult to imagine how Nelson can manage with the Prince Royal and several Neapolitan officers, to whom neither he nor anyone else on board can speak one word of Italian."

Lord Nelson sent word that he was sailing on the morrow.

Events moved rapidly. General Acton, on behalf of the King, particularly requested Sir William to accompany the expedition. Emma was ignored. She wept, partly from disappointment and partly through anger.

"Ferdinando likes to spite me because I am bosom friend of the Queen's and know too much about his goings on," she muttered furiously. "But I'll pay him—see if I don't! And I shall go to Naples if I please—the *Foudroyant* is *our* ship, when all's said and done!"

Nelson arrived at midnight, and she appealed to him: "They want to leave me behind, yet God knows I've worked as hard as anyone to recover the throne of Naples. My dear Queen would have me go and watch her interests, and so I shall, for you, only you, have the power to say whether I go or stay. Nelson, you couldn't deny me such a glorious moment?"

He looked intently at her eager, pleading face. "Nelson could deny you nothing; but circumstances are too much for him. My cabin is like a hog-sty, and the ship is crowded with Sicilian soldiers cleaning each other's heads and attending to other matters that should not be seen in public. It is no place for an elegant female."

"Good God! After thirteen years in Italia there's naught could shock me! Say I may come, and the soldiers can behave as they please!"

"Emma, I couldn't find a place for you. The Prince Royal and his suite will have my quarters, Neapolitan officers are in the ward-room, Sir William shall have Hardy's cabin—the rest of us must manage how we can. Had I planned this expedition, all would be very different, and you would be there."

Emma was seated and looked up at him. "Truly?"

Bending down, he swiftly kissed her red, pouting lips. "Aye—truly."

Early the next morning Emma saw Sir William embark in a rowing-

boat for the *Foudroyant*. He took with him Gaetano Spedillo, a couple of portmanteaux, and a nanny-goat, discourteously named Emma, to supply him with milk during the voyage. The squadron sailed before noon with a fresh and favourable wind; all afternoon Emma sat in the *loggia*, watching the ships diminish. She felt unutterably forlorn. Brilliant sunshine and sparkling water hurt her eyes, her head began to throb and she felt sick, but she would not quit her post. At five o'clock the last sail disappeared over the horizon. Rising to walk into the house, she swayed and, with a cry, fell in a faint upon the marble pavement.

All night long her dreams were of storms, shipwreck, and death at the cannon's mouth. She awakened unrefreshed and obsessed by foreboding.

"You must stay in bed, bach," said her mother.

Emma turned her face to the wall, muttering: "God, how I wish I'd made them take me!"

After breakfast Mrs. Cadogan returned, carrying a work-basket and a bundle of mending. Emma heard her pulling a chair over the sill to the balcony. There was sudden silence, then Mrs. Cadogan hurried back through the room. "I'm going to fetch the spy-glass," she said.

Emma sat up and looked out to sea. Sixteen Sail of the Line stretched across the bay, but as yet too distant for their flags to be seen. In a trice Emma was out of bed, her languor forgotten. When her mother returned she tried to snatch the telescope, but was slapped for her pains. Jealously she watched Mrs. Cadogan adjust the focus to her liking. "Is it the French, or the Spaniards?"

"Neither, gal; 'tis His Lordship's squadron returning!"

"My God, what can have happened?"

Four hours later the ships were again at anchor opposite the city; another hour elapsed and Sir William came ashore. Emma, who had driven down to the mole, received him at the King's steps.

"Whatever has happened?"

"My dear, last evening, when we had performed a third part of our voyage, His Majesty's ships *Bellerophon* and *Powerful* joined us and brought letters from Lord Keith, dated the 7th of June, informing Nelson that the Commander-in-Chief had been obliged to return to Minorca on account of his bad state of health. With the fleet under his command, Lord Keith had looked into Toulon, where he saw only two first-rates refitting, but learned that the French fleet from Brest had gone towards Genoa after remaining six days in har-

bour. His Lordship followed as far as Monaco, and his frigates actually got near enough to ascertain the enemy to be twenty-two Sail of the Line and many frigates. Deeming it imprudent to proceed farther and leave Minorca exposed, His Lordship sent the *Bellerophon* and *Powerful* to reinforce Nelson's squadron and bring intelligence of the French fleet being, on the 7th, between Monaco and Cape de Mele, steering eastward."

"That means Nelson will go to meet it as soon as he has landed the Hereditary Prince and the troops? "

"You are wiser than I, my dear Emma! Common sense must suppose that a squadron so very inferior to that of the enemy will not go in search of that enemy. But should the Russian squadron from Corfu fortunately arrive and join Lord Nelson, then indeed their combined force would be equal to anything the Republic could oppose to them in these seas."

"Huh! Russians!" Emma sniffed. "What use will they be against the French, who, however much one hates them, are only second to us as fighters? "

"As ye seem to know everything, perhaps ye will be able to supply an answer to that problem also," Sir William returned with asperity.



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

ALL through the afternoon troops and artillery were disembarked in prison galleys rowed by chained felons, but Nelson was not able to leave the *Foudroyant* until darkness had fallen. He landed at the mole, and, preceded by his coxswain carrying a lantern, walked quickly along the pleached alleys to Palazzo Palagonia. Entering unobserved, he noiselessly climbed the marble stairs to the shadowy gallery, where an archway made a frame for Emma embroidering muslin by light from an Argand lamp at Sir William's elbow. Colour had fled from her face, her tense pose betrayed vigilance for sounds outside the room and resentment at Sir William's determination to read aloud excerpts from Mr. Wraxall's recently published *Memoirs*.

"Em, listen to this, written in 1777 on the character of Frederick II of Prussia:

" 'Ambition, from the hour of his accession to the present moment has been his only real passion. Neither the faith of treaties, nor the laws of nations, nor the principles of justice and equity, have ever sufficiently restrained him from pursuing the aggrandizement of the Prussian monarchy. The conquest of Silesia, under all the circumstances, can scarcely be justified: the partition of Poland, however its injustice may seem to be diminished by the concurrence of Austria and Russia, was an act that revolted every mind not insensible to the distinctions of right and wrong.'

That is most interesting," said Sir William, "coming from such a judicious observer as my friend, N. W. Wraxall, and entirely confirms my own opinion of the late King of Prussia."

Emma did not answer; her quick ears had caught the clink of a metal button against the hilt of a sword. With a cry of welcome she sprang up and rushed to clasp Nelson by the hand. "Oh how happy I am to see you! though alas 'tis only to part again in a little while.

Thank God we've got to-night, and I can tell you I mean to make the most of it and 'banish sorrow till to-morrow', as Sir Will'um is always advising."

The Minister carefully put a marker in his book, saying as he did so, "I was afraid you would not find time to give us your company—a doubt I kept to myself, for I knew how disappointed Emma would be."

"Nothing was going to prevent my coming ashore this night, to spend it with my dearest friends."

"Mrs. Cadogan is cooking a *minestra verde* and roast pullet for your and Emma's supper," Sir William announced; "I'll watch ye at it while feasting modestly on a bowl of ass's milk."

"Do you feel no better?" Nelson sympathetically inquired.

"A little worse, I think; for even the short breath of sea air reduced my complaint, but it returned as cruelly as ever during this hot afternoon."

"I wish I could take you and Lady Hamilton for a health voyage. Miledi looks pale also."

"Emma allows her fancy too free a reign."

"Lud, Sir Will'um," she retorted, "would you have me cold and uninterested when our dearest friend goes forth to meet the enemy?"

Both she and Nelson did justice to the excellent supper ordered by Mrs. Cadogan, but Sir William, nauseated by the smell of food, hurriedly withdrew. Emma followed solicitously, and found Gaetano helping his master to bed. Returning, she dismissed the footman and, with the Admiral's help, carried wine and dessert to the *loggia*. Perching on her favourite seat, the broad coping of the balustrade, she began to peel an orange for Nelson, but her fingers trembled and it fell with a thud on the terrace below.

She laughed unsteadily. "Alack!—'twas the pick of the basket. Choose another and I'll manage better."

Illuminated by fluttering candle-flames, he took an orange at random; as he gave it his fingers touched and lingered. He did not move away, but stood against the balustrade looking into the darkness where the squadron lay at anchor. There was neither moon nor stars—the night was a black void pierced by ruby gleams of votive-lamps burning in Portuguese men-of-war and a solitary golden beam from the distinguishing lantern hoisted at the *Foudroyant's* top.

In silence that was vibrant Nelson and Emma feigned nonchalance as their excitement mounted. Each, acutely aware of the other, waited

breathlessly for a movement or sign that would terminate the exquisite tension. Emma was the first to challenge destiny. Catching the hand that lightly rested on the coping, she carried it to her throbbing bosom. The dim light showed Nelson's face, white and tense, as he fought temptation.

Emma looked at him, her violet eyes wide open and shining. "Can you go from me as a stranger, when I would hold you to my heart! Nelson, I love you! . . . I want you! . . . Must I plead with you to sleep in my arms on this last night before you go to battle?"

"By God, no!" With growing ardour he looked down into her face, drinking in her beauty. Suddenly he gathered her close, pressing her head back against his arm, holding her while his greedy tongue forced her lips to part. "You set me on fire," he muttered. "I have longed for, yet dreaded, this moment these many weeks."

"Dreaded?"

"Aye—dreaded. For with my love I knew must go my honour. But now I care not, all I want is what you offer me. . . . My God, you are beautiful!" Nelson drew back to gaze at the seductive burden in his arm. His pallid face looked haggard, his eyes glassy; shadows scored black lines from his bold nostrils to the corners of his shapely, sensitive mouth. "Why have I held off so long?" he murmured. "I have longed for you, dreamt of you! . . . 'Twas the thought of Sir William kept me back. . . . 'Tis a mean trick to lie with a man's wife under his roof. . . . If we were in my ship I should not feel it in the same way. . . . We are made for each other. . . . I know now that I never did love before. . . ."

"Neither have I!" Emma whispered, believing what she said.

"Thank God you've never had a child by Sir William or that other fellow—I could not endure it, for already I am jealous of favours that others have took. But I will not think of it—fancy wafts me to your dear, dear arms. Come, Emma, friend of my bosom, come away where we can *lock the door*."

They spent the night in Nelson's chamber, a corner room isolated by Sir William's cabinet from other sleeping apartments. The windows faced the bay; the balcony, being structurally more important than those crossing the façade, was embellished with stone urns from which flowed cascades of bougainvillea, which provided an effective screen. From this sheltered bower Emma and Nelson looked out into the mother-o'-pearl light of early morning and listened to tenor voices of fishermen as they hauled in their nets.

"I wish this moment would last for ever," Emma sighed, "'tis so beautiful, and I am happier than I have ever been could I but forget that parting draws near. What grief fills my heart when I see Blue Peter at the fore!"

"Nothing, nothing but duty would take me from thee. My love, my wife, for that you should be. Dear God, how cruel not to let us come together when we two were free! How different all would have been! Now we are both fixed and our love must be underhand, when it should be a flaming beacon for other lovers to follow. Meeting good Sir William at breakfast will be an ordeal I shall not quite like. Does he never act a husband's part?"

"Only when I can bear being a nun no more. We have an arrangement that I put a lighted candle on his writing-table, but often he pays no heed, and I find it in the morning covered with the extinguisher."

"That makes my mind a little easier. Were I in Sir William's case, with such a wife, nothing would keep me from her bed. But we will make up for it, and have many, many more nights like the last; for I am yours—ever, ever yours."

At breakfast Emma and Nelson avoided each other's eyes. Sir William looked yellow, having suffered all night, but he was determined to say farewell on the *Foudroyant's* quarter-deck. His glance held an old man's humble envy as he said: "Is it the prospect of another victory that gives ye such a buoyant air? I've never seen ye look so exalted."

Nelson laughed self-consciously. "I am resolved that the enemy shall not pass me without a battle, and I will so cut them up that they will not be fit even for a summer cruise."

Emma smiled commendation, but Sir William spoke words of prudence: "Nelson, pray consider the disparity between your squadron and the force it must oppose. The French are twenty-two Sail of the Line—four of them first-rates."

"And my force is only sixteen of the Line, including three Portuguese. Not one has three decks, and the *Lion* is but a sixty-four, very short of men." Nelson's tone was bitter. "My situation is a cruel one, and I am sure Lord Keith has lowered me in the eyes of Europe, for they will only know of sixteen Sail, and not the description of them. But on this you may depend: if my little squadron obeys my signals, not a ship shall fall into the hands of the enemy."

Emma gazed with glowing ardour. "However strong the French may be, Nelson will be first."

Fired by her look, he threw up his head and laughed. "Aye—who can stop him?"

The squadron was already under sail when Emma and Sir William said good-bye. Hurrying into their boat, they stood off, watching the *Foudroyant* gather way. Suddenly Nelson appeared on the stern-walk and raised a silver trumpet to his lips. "Tell Their Majesties," he shouted, "that I consider the best defence of the Sicilian dominions is to place myself alongside the French."

Emma and Sir William landed at the mole and were walking to their carriage when they saw Lieutenant John Tyson rattle in a *calesso* through Porta Felice and leap to the ground. Gazing in consternation at the squadron under sail, he failed to observe the British Minister and his lady until Sir William touched his arm.

"Left behind, eh? Very suspicious, young man! Have ye been lying in the arms of Venus?"

Mr. Tyson blushed to the roots of his hair. "I can't wait, Sir! If I can get a fast sailing-boat I may catch up with his Lordship."

"Go to the *cala* and ask for Ubaldo Macario—he has a *paranzello* which flies like the wind." Sir William chuckled as he looked after the discomfited sea-officer. "I am often very sorry for the young, whose only protection from eyes of experience is a cloak of injured dignity."

To return to the dull tranquillity of Palazzo Palagonia was a painful anti-climax after stirring events. Wandering into Nelson's room, Emma indulged in the mournful pleasure of seeing and touching possessions he had left behind. Some combings she appropriated and wound round her finger; she also took a shabby black shalloon hair tie and a uniform button. Thence she went to the bed and buried her face in the pillow. A distinctive scent of bear's grease and bergamot was too poignant a reminder, and Emma lay weeping where she and her lover had embraced. Tears brought on another headache and made her sick.

For the rest of the day she and Sir William reclined miserably in darkened chambers, trying to forget heat and flies that made daylight into purgatory. For a fortnight the temperature had steadily mounted, on three days out of four a *scirocco* prevailed, and only the most hardy Palermitans escaped the disorders that gave their city a bad name. June in Naples was wholesome compared with the same month in Palermo, where dung-heaps accumulated in the streets and the nature of food for sale in open-fronted shops was masked by glittering

shrouds of blue and green flies. Sir William was continually affected by such redundant pollution, and the English generally felt much out of order.

Sunday dawned, but the clang of church bells supplied Emma with no incentive to rise. Hour after hour she lay with closed eyes and puckered brows, complaining only when Giulia dropped her fan, but at night she was inspired by a letter written at seven o'clock in the morning.

"My dear Lady Hamilton,

What a difference—but it was to be—from your house to a boat! Fresh breeze of wind, the Ship four or five leagues from the Mole; getting on board into truly a hog-stye of a cabin, leaking like a sieve, consequently floating with water. What a change!

Not a Felucca near us. I saw them come out this morning, but they think there is too much wind and swell. Pray do not keep the Cutter, as I have not a thing, if anything important should arrive, to send you. Only think of Tyson's being left!

May God bless you, my dear Lady, and believe me, ever your truly affectionate and sincere friend, *Nelson*.

Lady Hamilton—Put the candle-stick on my writing-table."

Emma bedewed the words with tears and kissed the postscript. Ascertaining that Sir William had also received a packet by the cutter, she pattered barefooted to his room, and found him perusing documents at his desk. His gaunt figure was clad in a long night-shirt, his bony feet were thrust into red Turkish slippers, a tasselled yellow night-cap perched rakishly on his head.

He looked up kindly. "Well, my poor Em: do ye feel better?"

"I've been miserable and haunted by fears for Nelson, but I've had a letter that's put me in some spirits. You've had one too?"

"Nothing of consequence—just a note enclosing a dispatch from our Consul at Tunis reporting that Nelson's diplomacy has prevailed and brought the Bey of Tunis to see which way his interest lies. We are not to detain the cutter, so if ye want to write, ye must have your letter ready first thing in the morning."

"I'll have it ready to-night!" Impatient to begin, Emma hurried to the door, but was arrested by her conscience. Reluctantly she walked back to the desk. "How do you feel now, Sir Will'um?"

"I am but in a weak situation—no stomach, great goings out and

nothing getting in; but to-morrow I shall go to my old remedy, sea-bathing and bark." Putting on his spectacles, he searched for a paper among the many documents before him. "I've got some news here from Acton that will interest you. The Royalist troops entered Naples on Friday—the 14th—and took the Carmine. When Count Thurn wrote, the people were helping to attack the castles Nuovo and dell' Uovo and had set at liberty many hostages taken by the enemy."

Emma was roused. "That's something like!"

"Hmm—but the conditions Cardinal Ruffo offers in exchange for surrender are a typical example of the half-measures always adopted in this country. The French are to be carried back by sea to France with effects and property *at His Sicilian Majesty's expense*; the Jacobins are to be allowed to follow them—with this difference: they may embark with their effects *at their own expense*."

"My God! Is there to be no punishment?"

"I fancy that our suspicions of the Cardinal are going to prove true and Their Sicilian Majesties' dignity will be much mortified. His Eminence is resolved to conquer Naples himself. But no matter, so long as the business is done!"

"The Queen told me that Ruffo recommended 'dissembling and forgetting, or even of giving rewards for the purpose of winning over the chiefs of the rogues'. How could government thrive on such a crooked policy?"

"My dear Em, after watching the ramshackle Neapolitan system in operation over a period of thirty-five years, I'm not going to get hot about it now. But I've another item of news that is great indeed—the Austrians are in possession of Porto Spezzia!"

On the 19th the Court received further intelligence which clarified many points. A belated communication from the Cavaliere Antonio Micheroux reported that his mission had been partly successful. Admiral Usciakoff had declined, on grounds of expense, to bring twelve thousand troops from Zara to Naples, but agreed to land four hundred Russian infantry, and some Turks, at Manfredonia to reinforce the *Sanfedisti*. Micheroux had attached himself to this force in the capacity of His Sicilian Majesty's Plenipotentiary with the Russo-Turkish army, was present at the Russian squadron's attack on Anconia and witnessed the subsequent slaughter of all Jews in the city. A dispatch from Cardinal Ruffo recorded progress at Naples of the Tsar's soldiers in the capture of Fort Villema and Ponte della Maddalena under harassing fire from Caracciolo's gunboats. Other letters

from private sources described the surrender of Parthenopean garrisons at Castel-à-Mare and the Fort of Revigliano, and a march out with military honours upon an undertaking by Captain Foote that all wishing to leave the country would be transported to France under protection of the British flag.

Consternation at the manner in which their kingdom was being recovered momentarily united the estranged monarchs in a common grievance.

"I will not believe rumours that say the rebels shut up in the castles will be allowed to come out safe and sound to go to France," Ferdinando shouted in high-pitched indignation. "May God preserve us from believing that these savage vipers will be spared, especially Caracciolo, who knows every inlet of our coastline, and who might inflict the greatest damage on us."

Carolina answered: "I approve of banishment in order to put a stop to violence, but I hope His Eminence's prudence will ensure that no one shall be victimized for punishing an enemy of the State. The crimes of the nobles have been too great and notorious, but for them so flourishing a kingdom would not have been lost."

"Those twelve thousand Russians have been deflected to the Austrians by that rascal Thurgut!"

Sir William took a philosopher's interest in the unrolling of events and chuckled dryly as he remarked: "One can imagine what Nelson will say on hearing of the proceedings at Naples!"

On Wednesday at bed-time Emma received further comfort from another letter:

"Since I sent off the vessel yesterday forenoon, and despatched the *Telegraph* brig to Lord St. Vincent, I have received not the smallest information. This morning brought us in sight of the *Alexander* and *Goliath* and by noon they will have joined me. As to my feelings, my dear Lady, I know not how to express them; but I know how to feel them, for they have made me very unwell. Jefferson wants to give me castor oil; but that will not smooth my anxious mind. I long to be at the French fleet as much as ever a Miss longed for a husband, but prudence stops me. Ought I to risk giving the cursed French a chance of being mistress of the Mediterranean for one hour? I must have reinforcements very soon. Ah! Lord Keith, you have placed me in a situation to lower me in the eyes of Europe; they will say this cried-up Nelson is afraid with eighteen ships to attack twenty-two.

The thought kills me. I know what I am equal to, and what ships and men can do, and I declare to God if no more ships could join me, that I would instantly search out the French fleet, and fight them; for, believe me, I have no fear but that of being lowered in the opinion of those I love and esteem."

By the same *felucca* came a note to Sir William, but Emma did not hear of it until breakfast. "Did ye have an invitation from Nelson?"

She was off her guard, and stammered: "N-no; wh-what to do?"

"To enjoy a little sea air in the *Foudroyant*! Nelson promises to land us from a frigate if the enemy are sighted, and he will come off Palermo to fetch us. This fine weather must be lovely at sea, and I think my health would greatly benefit, so if you are agreeable, Em, I will accept this very unexpected invitation."

"Sir Will'um! Sir Will'um, after being so down in the doldrums 'tis like a miracle to be offered such a treat. Say 'yes' quickly, Sir Will'um!"

Emma lost no time in making preparations: by noon she had her clothes packed and Giulia making a bag for the harp. Emma intended to give all on board pleasure. Sir William had gone with General Acton to dine with His Majesty at the Colli, leaving Emma free to sit on the *loggia*, dreaming and looking at a small picturesque island, a *fata morgana* that appeared in summer when light clouds lay on the horizon. Gradually the image faded, but Emma continued to gaze out to sea, building airy castles which required no atmospheric refraction to sustain their magic form.

Darkness fell, and Sir William returned; he looked sallow and tired, but before sitting down he dropped a letter into Emma's lap. "The General and I met the master of the courier boat coming up from the mole; 'twas a fortunate encounter, as it enabled me to take Nelson's letter to the Colli to read to the King."

"You might have let the man come on with mine!"

"I didn't imagine the *billet* was of so much importance that ye couldn't wait a few hours!" Noticing that five candles were lit, Sir William economically extinguished three of them. "In my letter, Nelson anticipates the French fleet's return to Toulon because we have no force to prevent it. In that event he would proceed with the squadron to Naples and settle matters there. I told the King and Acton of this possibility, and they accepted it as a *firm offer*. I had

then to point out, gently as I could, that all depended on the French fleet's being disposed of somehow—I shall tell Nelson that we are under no kind of engagement.”

“Sir Will’um, I hope it will turn out so—just think how glorious to see Naples surrender to Nelson!”

“If he goes, it will certainly be very necessary for us to accompany him—Nelson is ignorant of the language and so accustomed to fair and open dealings that he has no patience when meeting with the contrary. One must always expect chicanery when one has to deal with Italians. His Majesty foresees the difficulties, and entreated me to accompany the expedition.”

“Did the King mention me?”

“No, neither did I. ’Twill be time enough when events take shape,” said Sir William, yawning. He rose and looked for a book to read in bed, saying as he searched: “Their Majesties and the General are much alarmed by accounts from Naples. The Calabrese army are plundering and setting fire to houses under pretence that they belong to Jacobins. The Turks attached to the Russian force are quite out of control; so great are their excesses that all respectable inhabitants are fleeing into the country.”

“Doesn’t Cardinal Ruffo know how to keep his army in order?”

“I fancy the *Sanfedisti* are beyond ecclesiastical control, and the Cavaliere Micheroux, who has attached himself to the Russo-Turkish force, is doing his best to usurp the Cardinal’s power.”

“Ruffo will be lucky if he is not betrayed by one of that family!”

Emma spent the next morning watching for the *Foudroyant*, but saw only the usual fleet of gaily-painted fishing-boats and a *polacca* entering the port. At noon Sir William came into the room with papers in his hand.

“Nelson will be in the bay as soon as the wind brings him; he is bound for Naples, and has wrote his intention to the King. For our information he encloses a letter from Lord St. Vincent giving intelligence of sixteen Sail of the Line under Admiral Alan Gardner approaching Port Mahon. This reinforcement, sufficient to protect Minorca from the Spaniards, released Lord Keith to go in search of the French fleet.”

Emma clapped her hands. “And releases Nelson to subdue the wicked rebels in Naples!”

“Actually the increased strength of our fleet in the western Mediterranean does not affect Nelson until the whereabouts of Admiral

Bruix be known—at any moment our friend may be called upon to oppose a powerful enemy with his totally inadequate squadron. Danger means nothing to Nelson, but the fear of losing his victorious reputation is torture, and to this is added the bitter disappointment of learning that the Earl is going home and Keith is now the Commander-in-Chief.”

“But that proud position should be Nelson’s! Who has contrived this wicked humiliation?”

“I, too, think the honour of commanding the Mediterranean fleet should be given to the Victor of the Nile, but I suppose Earl St. Vincent found himself unable to follow his own wish. Lord Keith is a Vice-Admiral of the Red, and senior by some twelve years to Nelson, but I can tell that our hero feels it from these words:

“I am agitated, but my resolution is fixed. For Heaven’s sake suffer no one to oppose it. I shall not be gone eight days. No harm can come to Sicily. I send My Lady and you Lord St. Vincent’s letter. I am full of grief and anxiety. I must go. It will finish the war. It will give a sprig of laurel to your affectionate friend, *Nelson*.’”

“How sad he sounds! The wretched Admiralty played a mean trick in sending to the Mediterranean a Second-in-Command senior to Nelson.”

“Our friend will reap more honours yet, and the enterprise we embark upon will put him in good fettle. Eight days to settle affairs at Naples! ’Tis clear he knows little of Italian methods! Now, my dear Em, we must make *our* plans. Gaetano shall take our luggage to the mole when the ship is in sight, for I fancy she will not anchor, and we will be ready in a carriage to drive Nelson to Palazzo Reale.”

“But the King is at the Colli!”

“His Majesty will come when the *Foudroyant* is sighted. Here is another point to be settled: who can we take to assist us with writing and translations? Of course we might be able to get in touch with Smith, but I really fear something must have happened to him. Never a letter does he answer, and his was a faithful character.”

“Let us trust we can get him, and take none from here.”

“That’s too great a risk. I’m waxing old, and cannot face the work I know there will be. I think we must approach Mrs. Græffer; she managed quite well when Cornelia had to give up. Do ye think she would leave her husband?”

"Willingly!" said Emma, with unnecessary emphasis.

"Then I'll ask Mrs. Cadogan to go to Villa Bastioni and propose the scheme, as we must remain in readiness. I will also instruct your mother to bring Cornelia here, if Lady Knight should die in our absence. There's so much to remember," he lamented as he wandered on to the balcony. In a moment he shouted jubilantly: "The *Foudroyant's* on the horizon, under a press of sail, a lovely sight! I can't see the rest of the squadron, but I suppose the other ships are not coming in."

At three o'clock in the afternoon Emma drove up Il Cassaro on Nelson's right and blind side, an unfortunate arrangement due to Sir William's good manners. The Little Admiral sat sandwiched in the middle of the seat, and though Emma drooped to make herself appear shorter, she and Sir William towered head and shoulders above the diminutive hero. Keyed to a fine point of perception, she felt his chagrin that this should be.

Meanwhile Sir William gave a *résumé* of affairs as he knew them. "Their Majesties are too courteous to express an opinion, but I fancy they feel surprise that Captain Foote offered their rebel subjects an asylum under the British flag, as was the case at Revigliano and Castel-à-Mare. Personally I incline to think Foote allows himself to be unduly influenced by Cardinal Ruffo, who is the quintessence of Italian finesse."

"It is a kind of awkward position for a junior officer," Nelson replied. "And I shall look upon any faults in negotiation as a direct result of my being obliged to withdraw Troubridge. But for that, Naples would now be in our hands."

The carriage approached the main entrance to the palace. Sir John Acton's shabby curricule blocked the way: the coachman and the aged horse slept peacefully under a cloud of flies. Sir William descended first and wandered off to wake the *carrozziere* with the point of his cane. Nelson assisted Emma to alight. "How lovely you are," he murmured, "and how happy I feel! Soon, very soon, we shall take our fill of love—but no, we can never be satisfied till death divides us!"

Emma could only squeeze his hand because Sir William was strolling back to say: "Em, ye'd better go in by the south door. If the Queen is at the convent, wait in the long corridor, and we'll come for you."

But Her Majesty was in her apartments, and appeared delighted to

see her friend. "*Ma chère* Miledi, you can tell me what is afoot? Mimi and I drove down to the *molo* as the *Foudroyant* came in. We saw you and the Chevalier, with your mother and Mrs. Græffer, waiting for the Admiral's barge, but we did not come forward, fearing to intrude."

"I wish you had, Ma'am. Sir Will'um thinks it best for us to go with Milord to Naples, to interpret for him. Mrs. Græffer comes too as amanuensis, for we anticipate much writing, and we must take some one trustworthy and familiar with Italian."

"I'm sure she'll work in His Majesty's interest," Carolina dryly responded. "Would I could accompany you! But the treatment I have received makes that impossible. Out of revenge all the evils that have happened to the Neapolitan nation are most unjustly imputed to me. It is my wish that the King should recover the Kingdom, and I will do all I can for that purpose, but I never desire to see a country again where my honour has been so put to scorn and defamed. Every object, every face would recall all these horrors to my mind. I cannot say what my fate will be, or where I shall have a roof over me, but without hesitation I prefer a monastery to the prospect of being Queen of Naples!"

"Don't say that! In future everything will be different. I will work, Ma'am, for you: I will make a Queen's party. 'Twill not be difficult: the *lazzaroni* count Sir Will'um and me their friends, for the people round Santa Lucia owe us many little kindnesses, and love us well, I'm sure."

"I agree, the bourgeoisie and the lower class are faithful and attached; the latter are sometimes misled by their passions, but their sentiments are good, while the nobility are nearly all bad. I say it with sorrow."

"All, all will be different in future!"

"I rely on you, Miledi. I foresee many storms, but, knowing your good heart, feel confident you will do all to ameliorate unjust hardships. I will send money to dispense as your compassion dictates. I only ask that you keep me informed, for I shall be very anxious. How I hope, my dear Emma, you are not caught in a battle, for I feel sure the French and Spaniards will attempt a bad blow. The withdrawal of St. Vincent is a fatal error, and persuades me that Lord Keith is actuated by jealousy of our valorous Admiral. Such is my opinion. I hope I may be mistaken. . . ."

When Emma left the royal apartments she took with her a thou-

sand ducats to be disbursed in charity. Both Nelson and the British Minister much admired this evidence of Carolina's magnanimity.

"Our mission also brought results," said Sir William. "His Majesty conferred full powers on Lord Nelson to prevent, if possible, the Cardinal from taking any steps or coming to any terms with the rebels that might be dishonourable to Their Majesties or hurtful to their future government. The King entreated him to assist in the reduction of the French garrisons in the castles of Sant' Elmo, Capua and Gaëta, and in bringing the Jacobin rebels to justice."

"Firmness at last!" Emma said with approval.

"If it be not too late! Fears are entertained that His Eminence favours the nobles and may put himself at their head to re-establish the feudal system and place his brother, Francesco, on the throne of the Two Sicilies. How much basis there is for that belief I cannot conjecture."

At five o'clock Emma kissed her mother good-bye and watched her gingerly descend a sea-ladder into a rowing-boat that was to take her to the King's steps. A few minutes afterwards the *Foudroyant* made sail, filled and slowly moved across the glassy surface of the bay into the turquoise light of evening.

The passage from Palermo to the Bay of Naples took four days—days of pleasure and nights of unutterable bliss. The *Foudroyant* was in company with nineteen ships-of-war sailing in three lines, headed by the flagships of Lord Nelson, the Marquis de Niza and Admiral Duckworth. Early in the morning of June the 24th the squadron was joined by the brig *Mutine* and Captain William Hoste came on board.

Nelson welcomed his *élève* with pleasure, but not the account he brought of a treaty made by Cardinal Ruffo with the French which would allow the rebels to march out of the castles of Naples with all their property and the honours of war, and, at their option, either to return to their own homes or to be transported to Toulon at His Sicilian Majesty's expense.

"My dear William, you can't have heard aright!"

"On my honour, Sir, I make no mistake," the young officer earnestly responded. "When I left the bay, flags of truce were flying on board the *Seahorse* and on the castles of Uovo and Nuovo. I understand there is an armistice of twenty-one days, and the garrisons of the forts are to keep possession until cartels are ready to receive those of the Neapolitans who wish to go to Toulon. *Polaccas* have been freighted at Sorrento to supplement the two or three available; and

I know for a fact that Captain Drummond of the *Bulldog* has orders from Captain Foote to take the *polaccas* under his protection to Toulon."

"A British man-of-war to defend traitors!" said Nelson, with bitter fury. "When do you say this infamous treaty was signed?"

"Yesterday, I believe, Sir."

"Thank God the Italian is not distinguished by great activity—we may yet be in time to prevent the execution of this outrage."

In order that the Republicans should receive as little warning as possible, the squadron kept outside the islands, and approached Naples through the Strait of Procida. As the ships rounded Punta Rocciola they were sighted from the castle, and a boat was sent from Procida to deliver documents from the Governor. The packet was brought to the stern-walk, where the Admiral sat with Emma, Sir William and Carry Græffer.

Nelson broke the seals and studied the enclosures. "Don Michele de Curtis sends me a translation of the terms, which seem to shock him as they would do any honest man." Nelson scanned the treaty, paragraph by paragraph, disgust deepening on his face. At the end he angrily shuffled the pages into order, saying: "The signatories are Cardinal Ruffo, Massa, Foote, the Russian and Turkish commanders, and, as a final touch, the French commandant of Sant' Elmo approves the articles!"

Emma grew impatient and stretched out her hand. "Let me look!"

"You are not the only one, Em, anxious to hear what the terms are," said Sir William reprovingly. "My dear Nelson, won't ye oblige us by reading them aloud?"

"Each clause is infamous and will make you hot with anger," Nelson warned. "The document is headed *Libertà, Eguaglianza, Repubblica Napoletana*." His nasal tones conveyed unmitigated scorn. "There are ten articles to the agreement:

"I.—The Forts Nuovo and Uovo shall be delivered to the commanders of the troops of His Majesty the King of the Two Sicilies, and of those of his allies, the King of England, the Emperor of All the Russias, and the Ottoman Porte, with all warlike stores, provisions, artillery and effects of every kind now in the magazines, of which an inventory shall be made by commissaries on both sides, after the present capitulation is signed.

II.—The troops composing the garrisons shall keep possession of

their forts until the vessels which shall be spoken of hereafter, destined to convey such as are desirous of going to Toulon, are ready to sail.

III.—The garrisons shall march out with the honours of war, with arms and baggage, drums beating, colours flying, matches lighted, and each with two pieces of artillery: they shall lay down their arms on the beach.

IV.—The persons and property, both movable and immovable, of all individuals composing the two garrisons shall be respected and guaranteed.

V.—All the said individuals shall have their choice of embarking on board the cartels, which shall be prepared for the purpose of carrying them to Toulon, or of remaining at Naples without being molested either in their persons or families.

VI.—The conditions contained in the present capitulation are common to every person of both sexes now in the forts.

VII.—The same conditions shall hold with respect to all the prisoners which the troops of His Majesty the King of the Two Sicilies and those of his allies may have made with the republican troops, in the different engagements which have taken place before the blockade of the forts.

VIII.—Messieurs the Archbishop of Salerno, Micheroux, Dillon and the Bishop of Avellino, detained in the forts, shall be delivered to the commandant of the Fort Sant' Elmo, where they shall remain as hostages until the arrival of the individuals sent to Toulon shall be ascertained.

IX.—All other hostages and State prisoners, confined in the two forts, shall be set at liberty immediately after the present capitulation is signed.

X.—None of the articles of the said capitulation can be put into execution until after they have been fully approved by the commandant of the Fort of Sant' Elmo.' ”

Nelson paused and looked up to say scathingly: “Which approval the French Colonel Méjean was graciously pleased to bestow on the 3rd messidor of the 7th year of liberty.”

“The Cardinal has contrived most shameful terms!” Sir William said indignantly. “Had you not arrived at this critical moment there would be a page in future history apportioning unmerited dishonour to Their Sicilian Majesties and their Government.”

"The Cardinal could hardly have conceived a treaty more hurtful to his Sovereign's interests, or less advantageous from a military point of view. So long as Sant' Elmo remains in the hands of the French, Naples is dominated by the enemy, as the guns can render the other castles untenable. Méjean counted on being relieved by the French fleet, and played for time. If one party can be liberated from the agreement, it naturally implies the other is in the same state. If it was the French fleet that was arriving, do you suppose the French and the rebels would adhere one moment to this armistice?"

"No!" said his hearers with one voice.

"And the French Admiral would say: '*No! I am not come here to look on, but to act.*' So says the British Admiral, and declares on his honour that the arrival of either fleet, British or French, destroys the compact, for neither can lay idle."

"Hear! Hear!" murmured Sir William, waving his hand above his head.

"Let's act!" said Carry Græffer, with an ingratiating giggle.

Emma said nothing, but the look she gave Nelson conveyed admiration and encouragement. At Sir William's suggestion, they climbed to the poop for a better view. The *Foudroyant* had rounded Punta di Posilipo and sailed across the *Cratere*. Every cavern and crag was familiar. The statue of San Francesco turned a stony back upon the ruined villa of Lucullus; the old hermit meditated outside his cave and kept an eye on his begging-basket, hanging on a rope over the sea. Lupins cast their blue mantle over the slopes of Piedigrotta; on the crest of the hill slender stone-pines lifted dense clumps of branches high into the air.

Sir William, anxiously directing his spy-glass to his casino on the shore, was dismayed to see the roof shattered and the arches of the *loggia* cast to the ground. "Villa Emma must have been hit from the sea," he ruefully remarked. "I wonder if it was fired on by Caracciolo!"

Nelson's telescope raked Sant' Elmo, now clearly in view, but it was Emma, whose keen sight required no aid, who first saw a flag of truce flying above Castel dell' Uovo. Some ten minutes later the harbour was revealed and the white flags hoisted on Castel Nuovo and at the mast-head of the *Seahorse*. Captain Hardy counted fourteen large *polaccas* moored alongside the arsenal, the *darsena* jetty and the quay of Castel Nuovo.

"Our arrival seems to have accelerated the rebels' wish to depart,"

Lord Nelson dryly remarked. "I have just observed one of these gentlemen fall, in his haste, head first into the water. No one appears anxious to rescue him, and he has not learnt to swim. Captain Hardy, will you kindly tell Mr. Staines to make the signal to annul the truce?"

Sir William, who stood alongside, demurred. "First had ye not better get in touch with the Cardinal?"

"I am determined never to give my approbation to any terms with rebels but that of unconditional submission to their Sovereign."

"'Tis well the Jacobins should know at once that they have Nelson to deal with, and not a shilly-shallying prelate who veers as the wind blows," cried Emma, on a note of pride.

North-east of the mole the *Foudroyant* hove-to, waiting for the *Culloden*, *Alexander* and *Minotaur* to come up before standing farther in. Soon after four o'clock Captain Foote came on board; Nelson received him in the writing-room, a temporary apartment made for diplomatic business by dividing the after-cabin down the middle. Emma and Sir William, sitting reading on the stern-walk, found themselves accessories at the interview.

"Captain Foote," said Lord Nelson's decisive voice, "I see you have brought me another copy of this infamous treaty. Will you explain why you put your name to it?"

There was an embarrassed pause before the sea officer answered: "I had really no option, Sir: the capitulation was sent to me after it had been signed by the Vicar-General and the Russian and Turkish commanders. At the time there seemed little choice but to make the best terms we could, as the enemy's fleet might appear and would frustrate our operations."

"Did you mention this danger to His Eminence?"

"I felt it incumbent on me to represent the possibility, and pointed out the reverses that would consequently follow."

"Whose idea was it to employ a British warship to protect the rebels on a voyage to Toulon?"

"In sending the treaty for my signature, Cardinal Ruffo assumed I would make arrangements to convey the prisoners to Toulon as stipulated in the treaty, and I lost no time in collecting suitable transports in accordance with what I conceived to be my duty."

"Did you express yourself as completely satisfied with the agreement?"

"Oh, no, Sir! I told the Cardinal I thought the terms very favour-

able to the Republicans, and to the Cavaliere Micheroux I protested against everything that could in any way be contrary to the rights of his Britannic Majesty, or those of the English nation. This I did, Sir, as a safeguard, being but little acquainted with the customs and prerogatives of nations relative to treaties and signatures."

"Caution, to be of any service, must be exercised *before* the event, not *after*," Nelson dryly observed. "You mention the Cavaliere Micheroux; what part did he play in the negotiations?"

"A very active part—in fact, I wondered if he had forced the Cardinal's hand, as it was very clear to me that Micheroux and the Russian commander were taking the lead and, I suspected, had communication with Sant' Elmo."

"'Tis all as clear as daylight!"

Emma and Sir William heard the rasp of a chair on the deck, followed by the sound of brisk steps pacing up and down. Nelson spoke slowly and gravely: "Captain Foote, you were placed in an arduous and unpleasant situation, and I give you full credit for zeal, assiduity and good intentions, but I do not condone the use made of the British flag to protect traitorous subjects of the King of Naples, our Gracious Majesty's ally."

Captain Foote sounded sulky as he replied: "I could not be supposed to know that the Cardinal was acting contrary to his Sovereign's interest, when I knew him to hold a very high confidential situation. My instructions from Captain Troubridge, when he sailed for Palermo, were to co-operate to the utmost of my power with Cardinal Ruffo and the Royalists."

"You have followed Ruffo blindly and allowed yourself to be imposed upon by a worthless fellow, who is endeavouring to form a party hostile to the interests of his King. Where is the Cardinal to be found?"

"Reale Casina, at the Ponte della Maddalena."

"But he wrote that he was in Naples."

"To my knowledge Cardinal Ruffo has not left his headquarters at the gate of the city."

"I can believe it!" Lord Nelson laughed. "'Tis all of a piece!"

After Captain Foote had taken a somewhat crestfallen departure, Nelson joined his guests in the stern gallery. "Did you hear all that? It confirms my belief that a sea officer is no match for a Cardinal! But we must do what we can to fix this swelled-up priest. The *Cullogen* and *Alexander* are approaching, and I have signalled Troubridge

and Ball to come on board. They shall go and tell His Eminence my opinion of the infamous treaty. And they shall be armed with some observations I have made." Nelson went up to Emma and gave her three foolscap sheets closely covered with writing. "Will you, My Lady, turn my views into Italian? And will you, Sir William, write on my behalf in a polite style a letter expressing my firm intentions?"

Sir William laughed: "You want me to give a diplomatic turn to a straight course?"

"I want you to tell this prelate that I expect him to act in concert with me at break of day to-morrow!"

Emma had the longer task, but she finished first because Nelson and Sir William could not agree on the tone of the letter.

"My dear fellow," said the Minister, "we defeat our object if we affront the Cardinal at the offset. I know these Italians! They are most tender in their dignity, and to get them to do anything, one must flatter them up."

"Ruffo will look for a full due before he gets flattery from me. Tell him in plain Italian, if there be such a thing, that I disapprove of the capitulation and am firmly resolved on no account to remain neutral with the respectable force which I have the honour to command. Our objects must be the same—to conquer the common foe, and to submit rebellious subjects to the clemency of His Sicilian Majesty."

"Sir Will'um, why do you want to act so diplomatic?" Emma demanded. "Let us rejoice to speak bold and true; we are English, not Neapolitans!"

"Who are a crew of damned fiddlers!" Nelson supplemented.

It was nearly seven o'clock when Captain Troubridge and Captain Ball came on board. Both officers ranked high in Emma's favour, and she greeted them warmly, but was gently thrust aside by Lord Nelson, who pressed upon his envoys copies of the capitulation and his own written observations on it.

"We'll leave you to read quietly and form your own conclusions," he said; "you'll find us outside in the gallery, anxious to hear your views."

Three minutes' perusal sufficed for Captain Troubridge. "Oh, how I long to have a dash at the thieves!" he exclaimed as he joined the group on the stern-walk. "'Tis obvious the Cardinal designs to recover the capital without much personal risk, and means to avoid making enemies among the Republicans of high rank and connexion. In short, he acts with the true Neapolitan shuffle!"

"Easy there," Captain Ball admonished. "The crux of the matter is: how far the Cardinal has been authorized to act for his Sovereign?"

"He received express orders not to admit the rebels to terms," Nelson answered. "Acts of clemency and the right of pardoning are reserved for the King."

"That clarifies our position. As none of the articles on this capitulation have yet been put into effect, no one could question Your Lordship's right to terminate the armistice at this stage."

"We saw a number of people getting into the *polaccas*," Sir William demurred.

"But not members of the rebel garrisons," Captain Ball replied. "The flags of truce are flying, and the rebels are in possession of the castles."

Nelson jumped up impatiently. "This agreement implies that both parties remain *in statu quo*, but if either party receives relief from its situation, then of course the compact falls to the ground and is of no effect."

Captain Troubridge offered a gloomy warning. "If we don't keep a sharp look out they'll get to wind'ard of us!"

"No, they won't, for I am going to act now," said Nelson. "I desire that you and Ball proceed forthwith to the Cardinal's headquarters at the Ponte della Maddalena, and you will tell him that I propose to send an ultimatum in our joint names to the French and the rebels. Two hours will be allowed for the French to give up Sant' Elmo; on which condition alone they shall be sent to France without the stipulation of being prisoners of war. The rebels and traitors must instantly throw themselves on the clemency of their Sovereign, for no other terms will be allowed them."

"My voice will not tremble, My Lord, when I state your intentions to the Cardinal," Captain Troubridge cheerfully asserted as he folded Nelson's memoranda.

Three minutes later he and Captain Ball were steering in the small cutter for the mouth of the Sebeto. Sailing under top-sails, the *Foudroyant* moved slowly in the same direction, so close to the shore that vine-dressers could be seen working in the royal vineyards at Portici. Emma sat alone on the stern-walk, idly watching the glorious scene changing as the sun declined. The barren summit of Vesuvius and the screes tumbling into the fertile valleys glittered like gold; at Torre del Greco little white houses were bathed in orange light and

their shadows lay blackly on the burnished lava that covered the old town. Musket-shots and yells occasionally interrupted the evening peace as Republicans and Royalists met. Through the open door at her back Emma heard disjointed remarks made by Sir William and Nelson as they wrote at opposite sides of the table in the writing-room.

"I must send a sketch of the anchorage to Duckworth; I wish the fleet to be not more than two-thirds of a cable from each other in Line of Battle. The *Foudroyant* to be the Van-ship. If the French fleet should favour us with a visit, I can easily take my station in the centre. Procida will be the safest place for you and Lady Hamilton in a battle."

Emma jumped up and appeared in the doorway crying: "I shall not leave this ship, I tell you now! If you won't have me on the quarter-deck, I shall go to the cock-pit and tend the wounded. There's no use either of you crossing me, for my mind is made up!"

Nelson looked up and smilingly shook his head. "The enemy would get the better of me, because my thoughts would be with you."

Sir William gave Emma a severe look. "Of course we will obey your orders, My Lord, and land at any place at any time."

At nine o'clock the *Foudroyant* anchored abreast of the city, some fourteen cables east of Castel dell' Uovo. Naples was illuminated; up the slopes of Pizzofalcone archways and colonnades were picked out in coloured lights, here and there a church dome looked like a golden crown floating in the darkness. Letters slowly appeared high in the sky above Chiaia. "'Viva il Re,'" Sir William read, "'Viva Lord Orazio Nelson.' Now I wonder who that bold Royalist can be? Someone of the first rank—no modest façade could accommodate such handsome sentiments."

"It is very flattering," the Admiral acknowledged in gratified tones.

From sounds that drifted across the water it was evident that displays of loyalty were contested; a building outlined in red and green lights near Santa Maria del Pianto suddenly shot up in flames. After gazing at the dazzling illuminations, immediate prospects seemed black as pitch. The stern-lamps were lit, and a lantern gently swayed at the main-top, distinguishing lights of a flagship, visible from a distance but scarcely noticeable to those on board.

"Listen!" said Nelson, touching Emma's arm.

Splashes and the creak of oars moving in wooden rowlocks sounded from the starboard quarter. Sir William, who stood in the waist

talking with Carry Græffer and the Surgeon, leant over the bulwark and peered down into the darkness.

In a moment a voice spoke with muffled caution: "*Eccellenza! Eccellenza!* This is Egidio Palli, speaking for the *lazzaroni*. Is our King on board?"

"Are you alone?" Sir William prudently inquired.

"Fifty of us are here; mostly from Porto Piccolo, the loyal quarter, *Eccellenza!*"

"Tell him to come on board," cried Lord Nelson, hastening from the quarter-deck.

Sir William obligingly transmitted the order, and some three minutes later Egidio Palli was ushered into the fore cabin. The Chief of the *lazzaroni* was dressed in *fiocchi*. Scarlet breeches laced with gold, white lawn shirt, sleeveless black velvet bolero, a yellow handkerchief knotted round his head and brass earrings that dangled on his shoulders. He greeted Emma with a friendly display of decayed eye-teeth, all that were left to him by the injurious water of *Fontana Coccovaia*.

"We are so pleased to see you," she responded graciously. "What will you do for us? For we make no secret to our friends that we are come to put the King and Queen back on the throne of Naples!"

"Yes, what will you do?" Sir William echoed. "The King relies upon his brave *lazzaroni*, and promises promotion to their leader."

Palli touched the hilt of his stiletto. "At the lifting up of my finger, ninety thousand of my people are ready, but only twenty thousand are armed. Ask our liberator to give us muskets and some little cannon, and in a week we will rid Naples of the Jacobins."

Emma immediately translated the request, adding her own recommendation: "You can trust him, for though he looks like a brigand and would murder a stranger as quick as you please, he is an old friend of ours."

Sir William chuckled: "Palli and his followers owe me something for hospitality—to my certain knowledge scores of ruffians escaped the galleys by making their sorties from my courtyard."

"Such a man would be very useful, and I am disposed to give his followers sufficient arms to keep order in the city should the Calabrese and Turks break out. Tell him," Nelson ended, "to return at this hour to-morrow night with sufficient boats to embark a hundred stand of arms, with bayonets, cartouche boxes and ammunition."

On the offer being translated, Palli rushed to the Admiral and,

before his intention could be guessed, pierced Nelson's thumb, and his own. As the blood mingled he cried: "*Fratellanza!*"

"What the devil? . . ."

"Say nothing," Sir William hastily interjected; "ye are now initiated into the brotherhood of the *lazzaroni*."

After Palli's departure, Emma, Sir William and Nelson lingered on deck hoping for the return of Troubridge and Ball, but it was midnight before the officers got back from their mission. Both looked weary and disgruntled as they came from the darkness into the dazzling light of the cabin.

Captain Troubridge flung himself into a chair and crossed his arms. "Through Harriman, acting as interpreter, I contrived to make our meaning perfectly clear to the Cardinal, but for a long time he met me with evasion, as is the common practice with these people. Knowing what to expect, I went on belabouring my points till I wore him down, and at last got him so provoked that he spoke plain. On my asking: 'If Lord Nelson breaks the armistice, will your Eminence assist him in his attack on the castles?' he replied straight and emphatically: 'I will neither assist him with men nor with guns.' I answered that I was glad to know where we stood, as we could now take measures accordingly. 'As you please,' he retorted; 'as far as I am concerned I am tired of the situation. I acted for the best to save Naples from destruction. If his lordship has any further observations to make, I beg he will address himself to the Cavaliere Micheroux and the Russian Commandant, who have been the principals.'"

"Was that his last word?" Nelson demanded.

"Not quite. He agreed to summon Sant' Elmo to surrender, but observed that if Lord Nelson was unwilling to recognize the treaty of capitulation of Nuovo and Uovo, formally signed by an English officer in the name of the King of Great Britain, the responsibility rested with His Lordship alone. If the treaty was not executed, he, for his part, would replace the 'patriots' *in statu quo*, and, withdrawing to the positions lately occupied by his troops, entrench himself and his whole army, leaving the English to conquer the enemy."

"We can do that without his permission," Nelson hotly returned. "I hope you told him?"

Captain Ball intervened with a laugh. "I can assure you, My Lord, there was nothing left unsaid. More than once it seemed as if the interview must end in blows between Troubridge and the Cardinal."

Nelson, his officers and the British Minister discussed plans until

the small hours. Declarations were drawn up for delivery to the Jacobins in the castles of Uovo and Nuovo; a summons to surrender was prepared for the French in Sant' Elmo. Emma translated the documents into Italian and then made notes for her letter to the Queen. When her work was completed her lovely head began to nod.

Sir William looked at her kindly. "My dear, your eyes draw straws; ye should go to bed."

"I think I must, as I can't keep awake though I've been pinching myself this great while. How vexing that sleep should conquer me when I want so much to be a partner in every plan against the enemy!" While speaking, Emma crossed to the chest of drawers, where a pair of candles burnt. "I must rob you of one to light me to bed, but you'll hardly miss it if I put t'other *on the writing-table*." Placing the candle-stick in front of Nelson, she met his eyes and smiled.

Soon after daybreak Captain Troubridge and Captain Ball again repaired to the Cardinal's headquarters, taking with them the three proclamations drawn up in Lord Nelson's name. Emma, Sir William, Carry Græffer and Mr. Jefferson, whose medical duties allowed leisure for flirtation, spent the morning on the poop watching the squadron anchoring in line of battle that extended from the arsenal towards Portici. The French tricolour floated above Sant' Elmo; flags of truce still fluttered from the fortresses; a Tree of Liberty, decorated with hundreds of red, blue and yellow cockades and flaunting Ferdinando's standard as a trophy, stood before Castel Nuovo.

Sir William, bracing his spy-glass against a mizzen shroud, reported that Fansaga's giant, facing the palace, still wore the *bonnet-rouge*. "All appears at a standstill: the Royalist and Jacobin parties seem content to keep possession of the districts they held at the moment the armistice was signed, and no more rebels show eagerness to embark in the *polaccas*."

At noon John Rushout came on board. He had left Palermo for Naples in time to see the *Sanfedisti* take the city. "And a bloody business it was, every brigand for himself and God help the Royalist or the Jacobin who showed a gold trinket!"

"Do you mean they robbed instead of fighting for the cause?" asked Emma in shocked tones.

"Oh, they dealt with the cause too! The Carmine was the only fortress to surrender, and the garrison was massacred to a man. Cheated by the rebels who took refuge in Uovo and Nuovo, the Bands of the Holy Faith went from house to house, rounding up men and

women whom they marched naked through the streets to shut up with lunatics from the *Incurabili* in the granaries near Ponte della Maddalena. I hear these makeshift prisons are packed so tight that the poor devils can't lie down!"

"I always said there would be barbarous work if the Calabrese and the Turks were let loose," Sir William remarked. "Has the Cardinal no control?"

"Very little—he has too many to please. Loyal subjects of the higher class complain of his evident partiality for the Jacobin party and declare that the Royalists are brow-beaten and denied access to His Eminence. Many accuse him of conniving at Caracciolo's escape."

"Isn't Caracciolo among the rebels in Nuovo?"

"Oh, dear no; he showed a clean pair of heels soon after his gunboats attacked the Russians at the Maddalena. 'Tis supposed he is attempting to cross the mountains to Rome."

"If he gets away 'twill be a severe blow to Their Majesties' honour. But to do so he must run the gauntlet of Fra Diavolo and his followers, who hold the road and all the mountain passes."

Before saying good-bye, Mr. Rushout promised to discover the fate of Sir William's furniture and carriages at Palazzo Sessa, Caserta and at the Villa Emma.

"I suppose you know that your secretary was killed soon after Championnet forced his way into Naples? 'Tis said Mr. Smith was murdered for showing too much curiosity about French movements."

"You shock me!" Sir William responded. "Poor Smith—a faithful soul whose only fault was an inquisitive disposition! His death lays another crime to the infamous régime of liberty!"

Emma wept on hearing the news. "And all the time we accused him of neglecting our interests! Can you forgive yourself for misjudging him? I shall feel ashamed every time I think of him."

"I confess I should have had more faith than to doubt poor Henry Smith after thirty-three years of faithful service," Sir William acknowledged.

The shock to their feelings was a bad preparation for a long, acrimonious interview between Lord Nelson and Cardinal Ruffo, which took place on board the flagship during the afternoon. The visit resulted from the mission undertaken in the early morning by Captain Troubridge and Captain Ball. His Sicilian Majesty's Vicario-

Generale was saluted with thirteen guns, a civility that failed to modify rancour.

"I come myself to tell you that I will be no party to breaking the treaty entered into with the patriots in Nuovo and Uovo, neither will I send the declarations to surrender that were delivered to me this morning by your envoys. You can, if you desire, summon the castles in your own name; for my part, I have advised the garrisons to avail themselves of Article V of the capitulation, as has been done by the patriots of the hill of San Martino, who have all departed by land."

"Then you mock the Jacobins, Your Eminence," Nelson flung back. "If they follow your advice, they will be torn to pieces by the *lazzaroni* waiting outside the fortresses, or be captured on the confines of the Kingdom by the Great Devil. No, Sir, that is not the way of a British Admiral. I make no terms with rebels, but neither will I trick them! My determination is that they submit unconditionally to the mercy of their Sovereign."

"My dear Nelson, ye can't speak as strong as that, or we shall get nowhere," said Sir William, who acted as interpreter. "I will put your words into modified language."

"Let him hear *what* I say *as* I say it."

Nelson was too late, Sir William was already covering firm intentions with a diplomatic cloak.

Emma, sitting apart in the shadows, watched as she listened to the war of words. Both the Cardinal and the Admiral held their ground. Ruffo sat at the head of the table, his heavy jowl set, his eyes downcast save when he darted a swift look at his antagonist. Early in the altercation Nelson sprang to his feet, and thus remained, a small aggressive figure, poised like a fighting cock. Behind him loomed the tall coffin made from *L'Orient's* main-mast, a souvenir that was both a trophy and a reminder of triumph's brevity. Sir William, leaning his elbow on the table, maintained a negligent pose and a manner of extreme affability, but after half an hour his strength began to flag. Eventually he was obliged to call upon Emma. "Mind ye don't let it get to an open rupture," he admonished in a whisper; "nothing but my phlegm has prevented it."

"I'll be careful," she answered.

"No one should think I came to terms with the patriots from choice," the Cardinal said. "I found myself in a most disagreeable position. To you, *Signori*, who have a fleet at your command, it appears simple to deliver ultimatums. But I had no sea force to speak

of and was hourly in dread of the enemy *Gallispana* arriving in the bay. Also it was my duty to preserve the city, which is repeatedly struck whenever fire is opened from Sant' Elmo."

Emma faithfully translated word for word.

"Bah!" muttered Nelson. "He thinks one house in Naples more to be prized than his Sovereign's honour!"

The Cardinal was worked up into a recital of his grievances. "You can have no idea what it has been to govern, or rather suppress, a score of uneducated and insubordinate chiefs of light infantry corps, who were all bent on plunder, murder and violence. It was a terrible and complicated matter absolutely beyond my powers. They brought me one thousand three hundred Jacobins, whom I could only keep in the Granari del Ponte. They dragged to my headquarters and shot in my presence at least fifty and wounded more than two hundred whom they brought to me naked. But now, praise be to God, the violence of the people has been considerably abated by dint of exertions, of edicts, patrols and sermons. In making terms we must be very merciful, for a thousand reasons. I do not think it possible to restore order in the country rapidly under any system, but it will be absolutely impossible to do so under new methods. . . ."

A look of scorn gathered on Nelson's face as he listened to Emma's translation. "When it comes to talking, an Admiral is no match for a Cardinal, but I'll put my opinion in writing!"

He went into the adjoining cabin and, after a short interval, returned with a sheet of paper, which he presented to Emma. "Please, Lady Hamilton, turn that into Italian, and let there be no mistake in its meaning."

Emma read aloud: "'Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson arrived with the British fleet the 24th June in the Bay of Naples, and found a treaty entered into with the Rebels, which, in his opinion, cannot be carried into execution without the approbation of His Sicilian Majesty.'"

Before the Cardinal could reply, Sir William intervened. He was urbane, persuasive, a friend who rejoiced to see an easy solution to a difficult *impasse*.

"Your Eminence, my dear Admiral, how simple the dilemma appears when presented in the right light! A compromise solves all difficulties: let matters remain as they are until we hear from Palermo: the Jacobins keeping to the castles and the French their possession of Sant' Elmo. In short, everything *in statu quo*. Who, I wonder, coined that valuable phrase! Perhaps our friend Quintus Horatius Flaccus."

Sir William's tact prevailed. An agreement was reached permitting the insurgents to embark in the waiting *polaccas*, but not to sail until orders came from the King. Nelson attended the Vicar-General to the gangway and bade him farewell with a semblance of cordiality.

The British Minister sighed in relief. "Now we have saved the Cardinal's *amour propre* we may expect all to go tranquilly and end without dishonour to Their Sicilian Majesties. I fancy Ruffio is not averse to strong measures. . . ."

"If he can disavow all responsibility!" said Nelson, ending the sentence "He is wise enough to know that some well-timed and speedy punishment will have the happiest effect."

At ten o'clock Egidio Palli and his followers came in boats to fetch the promised arms and ammunition. "All goes very well, Your Excellencies," said he. "Don Francesco Caracciolo has been captured in the mountains near Monteforte. He was disguised as a peasant, but forgot to take off his fine ring. Now he comes to Naples with a guard who will make sure he does not escape a second time."

"Are feelings against him running high?" Sir William inquired.

The *lazzarone* spat expressively and ran his finger across his throat. "Give him to us, *Eccellenza*; we know how to punish traitors!"



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

EMMA stood with Sir William on the quarter-deck watching the rebels marching out of Castel Nuovo to embark in *polaccas* moored under the battlements. British seamen and marines were in possession; King Ferdinando's colours floated above the east tower.

"Fancy allowing traitors to beat drums!" Emma muttered angrily.

"If one cannot do exactly as one would wish, one must do the next best thing," Sir William philosophically returned. "Until we hear from Palermo we must keep everything going on decently by supporting Cardinal Ruffo."

"I suppose so." Her voice was dubious. "Sir Will'um, we should get back to our writing, else those orders will never be put into Italian ready for to-morrow."

"You're quite right, Em," he answered, following her to the Admiral's quarters. "I'm surprised I keep so well performing exhausting work in this intolerable heat. But living on the water seems to have a beneficial effect on my complaint, and I flatter myself I'm putting on a little flesh. Now you, my dear, don't look as if you were getting sufficient rest. Are you sleeping well? Last night I fancied I heard you moving overhead—your cabin is just above mine."

"The deck is too thick for sound to come through. 'Twas rats you heard. Captain Hardy says the hold is alive with them, and 'tis a common sport for officers to go down at night to try who can spit the greatest number on his sword."

Lord Nelson was on board the Portuguese flagship acquainting the Marquis de Niza with plans for landing troops in the morning. Each ship in the squadron was contributing seamen and marines to an allied force under Captain Troubridge for the investing and besieging of Sant' Elmo.

"It is to be hoped the Franco-Spanish fleet do not pay us a visit while the operations are in progress," Sir William remarked. "With

so many captains out of their ships, Nelson must experience some anxiety."

"What happiness it will be when the French flag joins these two from the castles!" As she spoke Emma lifted one of the Parthenopean flags and spread it out. "I wonder why red, blue and yellow were chosen for the colours, Sir Will'um? Do you suppose 'twas decided by the hangings provided for the first flag by the monks of San Martino?"

"I fancy a method is followed; each country overrun and republi-
canized by the French is accorded its own tricolour—a sop to com-
pensate for loss of freedom and treasure."

"How one boils to think that in every kingdom there have been traitors ready to throw open the gates to the enemy! Look, how brazenly the French flag floats against the sky, so high over Naples that it can be seen for miles. Yet none are bold enough to pull it down. But for the Hero of the Nile it might remain for ever!"

"Aye," cried Nelson's voice behind her, "because no monarch has acted with expedition and vigour, and traitors have been allowed to plot with impunity. Weak Governments are more dangerous than Emperors armed for conquest."

Sir William answered: "I hope that Naples at least will see and profit by firm measures before we are many hours older."

"Is all fixed for to-morrow?" Emma eagerly inquired.

"Troubridge and Ball land with one thousand three hundred men at six o'clock in the morning and will unite with five hundred Russians and a body of Royalists, half of whose *officers* I have every reason to believe *rebels*. Cowards they have already proved themselves."

"Before operations commence I hope we shall hear from Palermo," said Sir William.

"The sloop *Balloon* came in just now, and I made certain she brought orders from Their Majesties, but she is from Messina with Commodore Stone's dispatches to the Marquis de Niza. The *Rainha* took the Demoiselles of France to Trieste, but soon after landing, Madame Victoire died, and her sister seems hardly in a better way."

"Poor, poor old creatures!" Emma lamented. "Considering the hardships they suffered 'tis a marvel they survived so long. Another crime that can be put down to the Republicans! My God, how I long to see the French humbled and driven back into their own country!"

On the following morning Emma and Sir William accompanied Lord Nelson in his barge to watch the marines land at the quay overlooking Porto Giande. It took two hours to disembark the guns and equipment, the standards and the band. At eight o'clock, as the Marquis de Niza's morning gun thundered across the bay, the troops marched off to the strains of *The Spanish Armada*.

Nelson climbed on to the Immacolatella and stood in the shadow of the little blue Virgin watching until the last marine turned the corner by Castel Nuovo. "The moment the guns are got against Sant' Elmo I am sure the French will be glad to surrender," he said, descending the ladder and dropping into the boat.

On returning to the *Foudroyant* they found the anxiously awaited letters. Emma had two from the Queen, Lord Nelson one from the King, and Sir William a long communication from General Acton written in his capacity as Prime Minister.

"All is now perfectly clear," said Sir William. "No capitulation is to be made with the rebels, who are to submit and trust to His Majesty's clemency. With regard to the French, no capitulation is to be admitted without His Majesty's ratification. The Cardinal, my dear Nelson, must abide by whatever intimation you think proper to make. In the General's own words:

"His Majesty confides entirely in the operations which Lord Nelson shall think convenient to determine for the reddition of Sant' Elmo and Gaëta, and that of the castles with the rebels, which last, however, are to have no conditions, but rely and depend only on His Majesty's mercy. . . . In that number of rebels are comprehended all the armed scoundrels in the castles, all the people of their ridiculous government under every denomination, and the refugees in those castles who are employed, or advising, and regulating Jacobins of that infamous party. I beg you, my dear Sir, to present Lord Nelson with these declarations of His Sicilian Majesty, who puts and confides his authority as to every military operation and his own dignity into the excellent and brave Lord Nelson's hands. The Cardinal receives His Majesty's orders by this occasion."

Nelson looked for his hat and prepared to leave the cabin. "Thank God I have now the authority to do what ought to have been done at the beginning—that is, seize the *polaccas* and bring the rebels in them directly under the guns of the fleet where they can be kept

more safely while waiting the King's pleasure. The most notorious Jacobins shall be taken aboard our ships and put in irons."

Lord Nelson's proposal to proclaim his reason for seizing the vessels was coolly received by the Vicar-General.

"Never mind!" said Nelson as he listened to Emma's translation of the Cardinal's letter; "if he refuses to do business I shall post notices without his help. Those guilty of serving the infamous Neapolitan Republic must be warned that I shall consider them still in rebellion if in twenty-four hours they do not give themselves up to the King's clemency."

So much time was used by the interchange of letters that it was late in the afternoon before the *polaccas* were escorted from the harbour by boats of the squadron. Brought to stations between the warships, the transports were anchored, and a search was made by armed guards. As a result, several Jacobin leaders were brought on board the flagship, among them Domenico Cirillo. Sir William and Emma were much upset to see an old friend in such a plight.

"Nelson, Dr. Cirillo can't stay here, he must go to another ship," cried Emma, in great distress. "His sufferings will be worse if he learns Sir Will'um is aboard. They was friends, real friends, taking interest in the same things. He came to our house regularly, and many is the kindly act he's done us. I would I could aid him, for I cannot believe he plotted against Their Majesties, for he saved the Queen's life ten times if he saved it once."

"It will be for the King to judge his subjects. I am determined in no respect whatever to interfere with the course of Neapolitan law. You may be sure the disaffected will try to implicate the English in the odium of everything that will ensue, and I shall be watchful for snares. That does not mean I will not move Dr. Cirillo hence—the *São Sebastião* shall have him."

Polaccas were anchored between the ships of the squadron; the *Foudroyant*, being the van, was free on the larboard side.

"I confess to being thankful for this mercy," Sir William remarked. "Just now I thoughtlessly looked towards the *Zealous*, but instead of our starboard neighbour, I encountered murderous looks from former acquaintances crowded on the deck of the transport. I fancy the pleasant part of this expedition is over, for when Their Majesties come, as come they must if any sort of government is to be established, we shall be called upon to vacate our delightful quarters."

Emma's face fell. "Sir Will'um, you don't know how I've grown to

love Nelson's sleeping-cabin, even though a half of it's been cut off for our writing-room."

"And I have an equally warm feeling for the apartment divided for me from the ward-room. We shall probably have to manage together in a tiny cabin such as we shared during the flight to Palermo. In this hot weather I shudder to think of a cabin on the gun-deck, when at this moment we have a free run of both stern galleries."

That night Emma confided her fears as she lay in the bend of Nelson's arm. "I declare I'd rather the King didn't recover his throne if that means I must be separated from you. Indeed, to be parted, and yet to see you daily, would be more than I could bear, my love, my only love."

"My dearest, do you think I will so readily relinquish the friend of my bosom? If you do, you know me very little. Nothing shall come between us, certainly not a King who comes to my ship. Though he must have the best, there will be some place left for us, and it will have a door with a lock to it."

The sun had risen, leaving a tinge of pink on the crater and screes of Vesuvius, when men's voices and the splash of oars floated through the open windows. Lord Nelson sprang up, listened, and hurried to the chair where his clothes lay.

"Emma, who would be a one-armed Admiral?"

"I'll help you," cried Emma. "But what do you think can be the matter? Perhaps the Jacobins from Naples are trying to rescue the rebels in the *polaccas*."

"My dearest love, that could not be: any who tried it would be fired on. From the sounds I incline to think we are being presented with a traitor. If it be Caracciolo, I must be on deck, where I ought to have been half an hour ago."

Emma looked up. She knelt, fastening the gilt buttons at the knees of his white breeches. "My God, whatever would you do with him? A villain who tried to sink the ship he once commanded."

"The custom of his service provides what is proper to be done," Nelson broke off, listening to steps crossing the fore-cabin.

The door was tried which led to the writing-room partitioned by a temporary bulkhead from Emma's apartment.

Lieutenant Parkinson shouted to the Signal-Midshipman: "Parsons! Parsons! Why do you stand about doing nothing, you chuckle-headed young skip-jack? The Admiral must be found, and look lively about it!"

"Perhaps he's in the sleeping-cabin?" the midshipman suggested in a cracked voice.

"No, my sweetening cock, Lady Hamilton is sleeping pretty in there, and well ye know it!" His words were followed by the sound of a flying kick and retreating footsteps.

Lord Nelson stood fully dressed and ready for the day. "'Tis to be hoped you will be able to get out unseen," said Emma apprehensively.

"Have no fear, I shall wait till the coast is clear." After a lingering kiss he passed, by way of the stern-walk, into the adjoining compartment. In a few moments Emma heard a bolt drawn; and a softly whistled tune as Nelson crossed the great cabin. She hastened to make her own toilet, and was soon ready to follow. As she was about to step on the quarter-deck she met Sir William ascending the ladder from the coach. He was shaken out of his usual aplomb, and grasped her arm excitedly:

"Such a sight as you never saw! Caracciolo, with a long beard, pale and half dead, and never looking up, brought bound on board some five minutes ago!"

Urged by his hand, she hurried to the rail and looked over. The waist was crowded with officers, seamen and *Sanfedisti* who had brought the prisoner on board. Caracciolo leant against the bulwark, painfully stretching his cramped limbs; at his feet lay pieces of rope that had bound him. He took no notice of anyone, and appeared absorbed in the painful task of restoring his circulation. He wore a pair of torn breeches, old and stained to the colour of rich brown earth, a ragged shirt open to the waist, a battered conical hat with part of the brim missing, wooden shoes and no stockings. An unkempt beard mingling with matted hair on his chest concealed the necklace of *Pinna Marina* that he always wore, but Emma saw it at his nape as he bent his head.

"*Non sum qualis eram,*" murmured Sir William.

Tom Allen approached with a tray of wine, but was waved aside, whereupon the First Lieutenant touched Caracciolo on the arm and beckoned him to follow. Leaning over the rail, Emma and Sir William watched the prisoner disappear.

"Taking him to the ward-room," Sir William surmised. His guess proved wrong. Caracciolo was put into a small cabin off the coach, with a couple of sentinels stationed outside.

Emma and Sir William went to breakfast. Allen brought a message from Nelson saying they were not to wait.

"I heard Caracciolo through the partition," said Carry Græffer, "and I saw him too, for there is a hole in the wood where a knot fell out. He said to Lieutenant Parkinson: 'I am accused of deserting my King in distress, and leaguings with his enemies, yet it was the King who deserted me and his faithful subjects. Our frontier was covered by an army under General Mack, superior to the advancing enemy, and you are aware that the sinews of war is money. The King collected everything that could be converted into specie, on pretence of paying that army, embarked it in the English ship *Vanguard* to the enormous amount of five hundred casks, and fled with it to Palermo, there to riot in luxurious safety. Who was then the traitor—the King or myself?'"

"He is a liar," Emma indignantly retorted: "there were but thirty-six firkins of gold!"

"For my part I don't grudge the money," said Carry, "'twas the King's anyway, and had it been left the Frenchies would have got it."

Before they rose from the table Captain Hardy came into the great cabin. "Sir William, we shall have to dismantle your sleeping apartment; Caracciolo is to be tried by court martial, and the court will sit in the ward-room. It is too small in its reduced state."

"Certainly, certainly. Gaetano will move my things out of the way," Sir William graciously responded. "If I am not guilty of too great curiosity, who are to be the Judges?"

"Count Thurn and five senior officers of the Neapolitan marine."

"Happily the Neapolitan navy, like the Portuguese, believes in an abundance of Commodores," Sir William whimsically remarked. "Isn't Lord Nelson coming to breakfast?"

"I think not, Sir."

"Then I'll pay his Lordship a visit and find out what's afoot."

Emma repaired to the writing-room to begin her daily gazette for the Queen, but was interrupted by Mrs. Græffer's conversation. "Come out here," Carry shouted from the gallery. "The water is so clear I can see pink anemones on the bottom and shoals of yellow jelly-fish."

"They're always there," Emma replied. "I've no time to waste, and you haven't either. Here's a heap of papers waiting to be turned into Italian."

"I'll do them sometime," Carry airily rejoined. "You're missing a lot. Boats are coming from the Neapolitan frigates; Count Thurn and Conte Mariscotti are together in full uniform, so is Don Pasquale

Valle. But the Italian officers don't look like British officers, do they? So bulgy, like pin-cushions! Give me a man who is lean and strong," she announced ecstatically. "Romance! romance! Ah, Emma, life is wonderful!"

Casting a mocking glance through the open door at Carry's back, Emma replied: "I don't care for a man who is always half seas over."

"What do you mean?" Carry asked in a sharp voice.

"Nothing," Emma innocently returned.

Silence supervened. It was broken by Carry exclaiming: "The *Seahorse* is still on the horizon. Does she take dispatches to Palermo?"

"Captain Foote is ordered to fetch the King."

Carry turned round and stood in the doorway. "Oh, Emma! Don't tell me that! 'Twould spoil everything to have him here!"

"Are you quite a fool? How can a Government be established without His Majesty, and how can he be put back on his throne of Naples unless he is here? What are we working for? God knows I'm not looking forward to giving up my cabin and all my little comforts, but I think of the reward. What glory to our good King George to our country, to ourselves, that we—our brave fleet, our great Nelson—will have the happiness of restoring King Ferdinando to his people and giving a future good and just Government to the Neapolitans!"

"Well said, Emma!" cried Sir William, entering from the great cabin. "We are privileged to take active parts in events that will go down in history, and I rejoice that at least I shall finish my diplomatic career gloriously!"

"Where is Nelson?" Emma asked.

"Waiting in the coach to receive Count Thurn. He sent you a message that he would not dine with us and Mr. Rushout, as it is his intention to see none but his officers while the court martial is assembled. Though not present at the trial, he will be kept informed, and he believes it is in the interests of justice to sever himself from outside opinion. How unfortunate that the court should sit in a British man-of-war! But there is no alternative, as Caracciolo would never receive fair trial in a Neapolitan ship."

"'Tis a horrible business," Emma acknowledged, "and we shall be wretched while it goes on, for there can only be one verdict. Is Nelson much upset? I call it unkind of him to avoid us, his friends who think like him in everything!"

She felt slighted and dismayed. He had said scores of times that

it was her love and support which enabled him to endure his situation. . . . Now he wanted neither. . . . Did vows and tender words mean nothing? . . . Was Nelson, the great Nelson, no different from other men? . . . Only last night he declared: "My beloved Emma, you and my country are the two dearest objects of my fond heart—a heart susceptible and true." . . . Yet in the morning this same Emma was shut out! Oh, God, how was it possible to write letters when one was on the rack? . . .

"Don't fidget, Emma!" said Sir William, looking over the top of his spectacles. "Each time you bump your elbow on the table you shake my hand, and this letter to Acton is important. If you don't care to apply yourself, go and take an airing in the gallery."

Jumping up pettishly, Emma muttered: "I'll go if you don't want me!"

"The suggestion is for your benefit, my dear!"

A vaulted roof partly protected the stern-walk from the sun, but Emma braved the glare in order to lean over the balustrade. On the gallery below stood a couple of sentries, and she heard voices coming through the open ports of the ward-room. Suddenly there was a shout: "If I had not succumbed to the ruling power, my children would have been vagabonds in the land of their fathers. *Signori*, some of you are parents, and I appeal to your feelings; let each of you place yourself in my situation, and say how you would have acted." There was a pause, then Caracciolo laughed on a hollow mocking note. "Ah, but I think my destruction is pre-determined, and this court anything but a court of justice. If I am right, my blood be on your heads and those of your children!"

Silence followed the frenzied speech. Emma shuddered and felt icy cold, although the thermometer registered 104 degrees in the shade. She hurried back to Sir William, tranquilly signing his name on his letter to General Acton.

He looked up. "It appears to me that I am the only one to get things done. Your letter to the Queen isn't finished, and Mrs. Græffer spends her time on the quarter-deck waiting for reports of the trial which Mr. Jefferson obligingly supplies—the court being open, as is customary, to everyone who chooses to enter. Apparently Caracciolo is not making out a good case and attempts to prove his innocence without any supporting evidence—the last desperate efforts of a man striving to save his life."

John Rushout came on board in time for dinner at noon. He

brought Sir William information about his property in Naples, but declined to impart it until his own curiosity was satisfied. "Rumours are rife that Lord Nelson is trying Caracciolo on board this ship—but I can't believe he would use the *Foudroyant* for the court martial of a Neapolitan traitor when Ferdinando's frigates are anchored in the bay."

"An unfortunate necessity," Sir William airily rejoined. "The unreliable state of the Sicilian marine precluded any expectation of justice on board a Neapolitan ship, thus it appeared to Lord Nelson and myself essential to convene the court here where we could insure everything being fair and aboveboard. This expedient is followed as the *Foudroyant* can at this moment be regarded as His Sicilian Majesty's seat of Government."

John Rushout blinked wisely behind horn-rimmed spectacles. "Well, I don't think I should lend my flagship for a pack of foreigners to sit in judgment on one of their own traitors."

"You'll never have the opportunity," Emma rudely ejaculated.

"Enough, enough of this matter!" said Sir William suavely. "Now as sauce for this excellent capon, tell me of my houses, furniture and carriages."

"I've brought a letter from your *maitre d'hôtel*." The young man looked sulky as he felt in his pocket. "Apparently all your servants are kept on at full wages and they were made full use of by a French company who lodged at Palazzo Sessa. The house was emptied of valuables and your carriages taken when the Republicans departed."

"The Devil!" Sir William ejaculated.

"Our lovely china and glass and my beautiful gowns!" Emma lamented. "I daren't think on't or I shall weep!"

"No other house in Naples was so completely and elegantly furnished," Sir William observed. "'Tis hard indeed—and three English carriages that were envied even by the King! However, I'm glad to know the worst, and 'twill be some sort of satisfaction to cut short the roguery of my *maitre d'hôtel*."

Emma and Sir William hoped their guest would take leave after dinner, but Mr. Rushout declared he would wait to hear the verdict of the court martial. Emma felt on edge and a headache starting, but she politely led the way to the stern-walk, where they were joined by Mr. Jefferson. "It's all over," he cheerfully announced, "Caracciolo is to be hanged at five o'clock from the yard-arm of *La Minerva*, at sunset his body will be cut down and thrown into the sea."

"Oh, my God!" cried Emma in horror.

Sir William was taken aback. "I expected a death sentence, but not such swift execution!"

"He deserves it!" said John Rushout.

"You speak truly," the surgeon responded. "Never was a traitor more worthy of punishment. I understand enough Italian to know that Caracciolo was given every opportunity to prove his innocence, but he couldn't deny he had rebelled against his Sovereign and fired on a Sicilian frigate and on British vessels. His attempt to prove he had been forced into the Republican service was exploded as it was proved he had many opportunities to escape. From the beginning there was no doubt of the finding if justice was served."

"Are the Neapolitan officers still on board?" Sir William inquired.

Mr. Jefferson answered: "Count Thurn is with His Lordship, Sir. The other officers were being piped over the side as I left the quarter-deck."

Sir William rose from his chair and stood hesitating. "I think I'll go below and see Nelson. . . ."

"Please do, Sir Will'um," said Emma urgently. "Caracciolo's fate wouldn't seem so dreadful if we hadn't been friends. I can scarce bear to think what he's come to!" She began to cry. "Forgive me, I can't go on—I must be alone!" Holding her handkerchief to her eyes, she ran into her cabin and shut the door.

"Lady Hamilton's one fault is too much sensibility," Sir William remarked in extenuation.

On the Admiral's cot Emma thankfully reclined amid Fanny Nelson's embroidered vallances, but relief at escaping social duties soon yielded to physical discomforts of a cabin hot as an oven and smelling stiflingly of melting pitch, scrubbed wood, tarred rope and brine: combined odours peculiar to a ship. Her head throbbed like a beating heart; dazzling lights wheeled before her closed eyes. She felt, but could not think. Through the stern-lights filtered the gay sounds of Carry Græffer's coquettish voice and the baritones of her swains. Presently Emma sank into a troubled doze, from which she was roused by Sir William entering from the stern-walk. Closing the door carefully, he tiptoed to the side of the cot. "I come to warn ye, my dear, that in half an hour a gun will be fired on board the *Minerva* and at the same moment Caracciolo will be shot into eternity. He was condemned by the majority of the court martial and the sentence was confirmed by Nelson. I found Count Thurn urging

His Lordship to delay the execution, representing that it is usual to give twenty-four hours for the care of the soul. Nelson remained adamant, although I supported Thurn."

Emma sat up angrily. "Why did you, Sir Will'um? 'Tis hard enough for Nelson, without you turning against him!"

"Tut, my dear, ye talk wildly. Lord Nelson's manner of acting must be as his conscience and honour dictate, and I admit his determination may be found best at the last."

"Then why did you support Count Thurn?"

Sir William shrugged his shoulders. "After so long in this country I am probably imbued with the national characteristic—*half-measures*. But it is no matter because the die is cast, and we must abide by it as well as we can. To-morrow we attack the Castel of Sant' Elmo—God prosper the just cause."

Sir William's solemnity rendered Emma resentful and uneasy. She was glad to see him go, yet the moment she heard him conversing with Carry and John Rushout she wished him back lest he spoke in criticism of Nelson.

Time passed. In a fever of nervous tension Emma cautiously unlatched the door and peered through the gap. Captain Hardy and the Chaplain had joined the group on the stern-walk, all stood looking towards the *Cratere* where *La Minerva* lay at anchor. The water round the frigate was black with rowing-boats packed with Royalists eager to see the Brigadiere dangle from the yard-arm of the ship he once commanded.

Sir William stood watch in hand. "One minute more!"

Unnoticed, Emma stepped on to the gallery and leant with her elbows on the balustrade. There was not a breath of air, the sun blazed relentlessly upon a sea of glittering blue, even the smoke from Vesuvius hung motionless, a gauzy scarf magically upheld.

Expectant silence was rent by a crash, a spurt of flame flickered from *La Minerva's* bow-chaser. At the signal a lonely black object shot up from the deck; as it ascended it swung and its legs frantically fought the air.

Carry screamed and Emma gasped; John Rushout drew his breath in a sharp hissing sound. Mr. Comyn bowed his head in prayer.

"In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased.

Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most

merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death."

"Amen," said Sir William.

In life Francesco Caracciolo was short and thick-set; in death he appeared stretched to a fantastic length, hanging from a slender rope. He dangled some six feet below the fore yard-arm, his head reclined to one side, his shoulders drooped—he looked like a great black swan suspended by its neck.

Sightseers in the small boats shouted and clapped their hands. "Long live the King; death to traitors!" From the *polacca* moored between the flagship and the *Zealous* came a disturbed hum as Jacobins, awaiting their Sovereign's pleasure, conferred fearfully among themselves.

Emma, returning to her cabin, flung herself on the deck and buried her head in her arms: a lowly attitude in keeping with an abject state of mind. She heard John Rushout saying good-bye to Sir William, and Carry Græffer accepting Mr. Jefferson's invitation to accompany him to the scene of execution. Sir William conducted his guests to the gangway and did not come back. Emma was oblivious of time until four bells were struck. An hour had passed. . . . Not so long before Caracciolo would be cut down and thrown into the sea. . . .

She got up and wandered to the gallery to find a changed scene. A yellow tinge suffused the sky; clouds massed on the horizon; thunder could just be heard muttering amid the mountains. The sun, sinking behind Posilipo, cast jaundiced light upon the cliffs and the high arch of the grotto; upon *La Minerva* and all the little boats bobbing on the water. The setting sun could do nothing for Caracciolo but throw into blacker relief his long, stretched body.

Brisk steps crossing the writing-room made Emma's heart beat faster; but she did not turn until Nelson flung himself against the balustrade, clasping her arm as he did so.

"What a day! But justice has been done, as Caracciolo did not attempt to deny, and I hope the punishment will have its effect on other traitors."

"Why did you keep away from me? I'll not forgive you for it easy! Did you not trust me? Or was I so little in your thoughts?" Emma's cheeks burnt with temper and her voice rose to a challenging note.

Nelson regarded her with surprised dismay. "How can you be angry with me? I do not deserve it. If I did not see you this day

it was for *very prudent reasons*. The French and Jacobins will be at pains to make a traitor appear a hero, and those who do not inquire into the truth will believe that Caracciolo was brought to an unjust end. Could it be said that I had seen Lady Hamilton during the trial, you may be sure the information would be turned to your discredit—such things are!”

“I hadn’t thought of that, and I’m sorry I spoke as I did,” Emma faltered. “I fancied you didn’t want me, and that brought my temper up. As for Caracciolo, none can deny he got the punishment laid down for an officer turned traitor.”

“That must be admitted, but it will not prevent exception being taken to the speedy execution of the sentence. Some may claim that it is more humane to let a man moulder for years in a dungeon than to kill him outright—a principle practised in Naples without the public conscience suffering one twinge. Yet when I give rapid effect to justice I am reproached because I did not allow twenty-four hours for the care of the soul! That is nonsense! Does a cannon ball wait until its victim has prepared his soul? An officer should be ready to meet his God at any moment. That he elects to act a traitor’s part does not afford him greater privileges than the hero receives who falls on the field of honour.”

“When you talk I see everything different, and I scorn myself for thinking petty uncharitable thoughts. Nelson, forgive me! Help me to act good and noble!”

“My dearest Emma! How can I, who kneel humbly at your feet, teach you, who are an angel?”

Footsteps in the great cabin caused Emma to turn swiftly. She saw Sir William cross the threshold of the writing-room. He waved his hand, but made no move to join them.

She called: “Aren’t you coming out, Sir Will’um? There’s a storm brewing—my head warned me hours ago and I shan’t be sorry when it breaks, for ’twill cool the air. Look! the whole sky is a-flicker with lightning!”

“No, my dear, I’ve seen too many electric storms over Naples Bay to feel any curiosity, and I shall not look out again until after sundown!” His tone made Nelson raise his brow and glance significantly at Emma.

Taking an old quill, Sir William economically cut a new nib and opened his diary. He looked fatigued and old. His mouth hung a little open, his hand hovered indecisively over the page, forming

phantom characters. When he made up his mind to write he murmured an accompaniment to his pen:

"Saturday, June the 29th, 1799.. A court martial was held this day on Don Francesco Caracciolo, commodore in His Sicilian Majesty's marine, who was tried by five Neapolitan officers in Lord Nelson's flagship *Foudroyant*. The prisoner was pronounced guilty of rebellion against his Sovereign and of firing upon *La Minerva* causing loss of life. The sentence was death, and at this moment Caracciolo hangs at the fore yard-arm of the frigate he once commanded and subsequently fired on. *Saepe intereunt alius meditantes necem.*"

Nelson touched Emma's arm and pointed to the sun, disappearing in a blaze of angry blood-red light; a few seconds later the black shape that had been Caracciolo descended in short jerks. Nelson brought his hand to the salute.

An hour after darkness the storm broke; thunder, lightning, wind and rain contended for mastery. The sea was whipped into a ferment, at one moment the bay was revealed in eerie blue light, at the next all was profound darkness. Shrieks and prayers came from the rebels in the *poluccas*; prisoners in the *Foudroyant* added their groans to the lamentations. Such a night following a day of tension had its effect upon Lord Nelson's shattered constitution. In the early morning he had a spasm of the heart, frightening Emma, who could not call for the hot stupes that always brought relief. She had to recourse to vigorous rubbing, and presently saw his colour returning. He smiled wanly and patted her hand.

"When these attacks come on I get so cold 'tis like the hand of death. But you, my dearest Emma, give me warmth and call me back to love and life."

Some hours later he was sufficiently recovered to attend divine service on deck and to read the Lessons.

"But we'll have a quiet day," he said, "for we all need it. Let us hope the cutter I see coming in brings news of His Majesty's speedy arrival, which would ease us all."

The delivery of a bulky package brought Sir William several letters from General Acton. As he read his eyebrows went up and he made a sound of surprise. "Not quite what we expected! The King appears to be waiting our advice before setting out, but in the meantime sends orders for the arrest of Cardinal Ruffo if he refuses to

break the truce and follow Lord Nelson's direction. Three dispatches are enclosed: one for General de Gambs directing him to take command of the troops at Naples, arrest the Cardinal and cause him to embark in a frigate for Palermo; another for the Duke of Salandra to the same purpose, and a third for Baron Tschudy repeating the order. You, my dear Nelson, are thus empowered to choose the Cardinal's successor by the delivery of one of these documents."

"Five days ago such authority would have saved much argument, but now the Cardinal sees reason and assists Troubridge to attack Sant' Elmo, we serve our best interests by keeping smooth with him."

"I quite agree," said Sir William. "If in the future His Eminence will not take upon himself to act, you can use this authority."

"It won't be necessary if the King can be induced to come here—I can't understand his hesitation."

"He will not come until he thinks danger is past," said Emma. "Ferdinando's first concern is his own safety—the arrival of the *Seahorse* may give him courage!"

"There's something in what Emma says," Sir William acknowledged. "I have often observed that his own personal security has a great influence on His Majesty."

"It must be overcome! Pray tell General Acton once again that the King must use all expedition in hoisting his royal standard before Naples."

Despite repeated urging and encouraging reports from the capital, Ferdinando procrastinated for another week. On the evening of July the 8th he reached Procida in his own frigate *Sirena* in company with a convoy of troop-ships escorted by the *Seahorse*. Cardinal Ruffo landed on the island in time to receive the King and to forestall the British account of recent events. To the prelate's annoyance, eloquence and a melodious voice were impaired by the distant bombardment of Sant' Elmo, proceeding in a spirited manner under Captain Troubridges' direction.

In Naples, and on board the *Foudroyant*, the noise was deafening, but invigorating to Nelson. "Some of the military disapprove of such irregular proceedings as naval officers attacking and defending fortifications. We have but one idea—to get close alongside. None but a sailor would have placed a battery only one hundred and eighty yards from a fortress so formidably situated—a soldier must have gone according to art and the zigzag way."

Sir William laughed. "If Troubridge is once irritated he will spare

no pains to carry his point. Méjean made a fatal mistake in heading his letters *Liberté, Egalité, Guerre aux Tyrans*."

"This pounding will convince the French General that he has no choice but unconditional surrender. Did I tell you he offered to capitulate to Troubridge for one hundred and fifty thousand ducats!"

"I'm not surprised!" Sir William lightly rejoined.

"Méjean will soon learn that the English do not bargain their honour away," said Emma with satisfaction. "How I long for Sant' Elmo to fall! My only grief is that Captain Ball will not be here to see it. But perhaps he will soon have the joy of taking La Valletta, for the French garrison must lose heart when they learn that Naples is lost."

"If some troops could be landed the matter would quickly be settled. Situated as we are, Ball must keep up the spirits of the brave Maltese until I can spare a few ships to finish his hard labours."

After lingering for thirty-six hours at Procida, King Ferdinando ventured nearer to his capital. On the afternoon of July the 10th his royal standard fluttered up to the mast-head of the *Foudroyant* and was saluted by every ship in the squadron and by every castle but Sant' Elmo—an omission remedied by Captain Troubridge, who fired his mortars twenty-one times at the fortress walls.

The King was accompanied by Sir John Acton, Prince Castelcicala and numerous attendants who took possession of the Admiral's quarters; the royal cooks were accommodated on the larboard side of the main deck. Sir William retained his rights to a part of the ward-room, Emma was unfortunate and succeeded to Carry Græffer's small box-like compartment off the coach. Carry and her possessions moved to the Surgeon's store-room in the orlop deck, an arrangement which she found quite agreeable.

"But we have bade adieu to our happy nights," Emma lamented to Nelson, "and now Sir Will'um talks of going home on leave before the winter sets in! I tell him 'twould be far wiser to wait for spring, but he won't heed me, and says his native air will give him a bracing."

"If you go, I shall strike my flag—my own health is so bad that I could not keep on without your tender care. But I don't think Sir William will act in a hurry—he has talked of leave ever since I came to Naples, and will not wish to quit his post until the King is firmly seated on his throne. Many weeks must pass before tranquillity is restored."

Emma and Nelson leant on the quarter-deck rail watching a lively

scene proceeding in the waist. Hundreds of loyal subjects had come out in boats to welcome the King; the chief of the *lazzaroni* brought gifts that delighted the royal humour. Two fine calves dressed as female fashionables of the highest grade careered about the deck, tossing the ostrich feathers on their heads, trying to kick off satin skirts.

Ferdinando was doubled up with uncontrollable laughter. "How droll! Look! they throw up their little heels. What good actors they are to-day and to-morrow what tender veal they will make! Dear little calves—you have pleased your King!" He bowed to them with mock gravity and blew a kiss on two fat fingers.

The French garrison in Sant' Elmo surrendered on the morning after Ferdinando's arrival, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the tricolour hauled down and his own flag triumphant. At noon Captain Troubridge came on board bringing with him the keys of the Castle and the flag of the French Republic. He was frank in the account he gave to the King and General Acton. "Your Majesty, great discontent prevails amongst the people because punishment is not inflicted on the Jacobins by the Cardinal. He takes all the villains into his employ. A Jacobin was ordered to be released the other day, and the person he sent to liberate him let two others escape! Throughout the siege a diabolical good understanding existed between Neapolitan officers stationed at the advance posts, and the enemy."

Benignly indulgent, the King extended a large, olive-skinned hand and patted the irate sea officer on the back. "Rest assured, Captain Troubridge, that my Judges will try all traitors who have plotted against me, and they will pay for it with their lives."

For a fortnight Captain Hoste and Fra Diavolo had maintained a sea and land offensive against Gaëta; this fortress and that of Capua were the last strongholds held by the enemy in the Kingdom of Naples. Early in the morning of July the 13th a body of seamen and all the marines of the fleet were landed under the command of Captain Troubridge and Captain Hallowell. Joining the troops and artillery brought from Palermo, they marched to a camp at Caserta.

After watching through a spy-glass the disembarkation, King Ferdinando came down from the poop to hold a levée on the quarter-deck. A large concourse of nobles attended. Since the fall of Sant' Elmo, and the rounding up of Jacobins vigorously proceeding, those whose loyalty was suspect evinced great anxiety to congratulate their Sovereign on his return to Naples. Many brought their ladies, who

attended a smaller court in the fore-cabin where Emma, acting as the Queen's deputy, acknowledged their curtseys. Women of the bed-chamber, whose French sympathies had been frankly avowed, met a sweet smile that was also inimical.

"What wretches they are," Emma subsequently confided to Nelson, "stabbing the Queen in the back, then coming simpering to me."

At noon, dinner was served on the quarter-deck to the royal party and the King's guests; as an accompaniment to dessert Emma played on her harp. Throughout the afternoon His Majesty slumbered soundly, and his snores penetrated to Sir William's apartment off the ward-room which also had to serve as a secretariat. The heat was dreadful; pink drops trickled down Carry's neck from the rouge on her cheeks; Emma's curls clung damply to her forehead; Sir William's sallow visage was flushed crimson. Nothing was seen of Nelson until six o'clock, when he joined Emma and Sir William on the lower stern-walk.

"You look agitated," the Minister remarked. "I hope the French fleet is not approaching?"

"That would cause me less concern than a letter just come from Lord Keith directing me to send every ship I can spare to Minorca, where a large force is being assembled to frustrate the enemy's intentions."

"An awkward moment to get such an order; what can you do?"

"I will not part with a single ship, as I could not do so without recalling the force sent to Capua and Gaëta. You will easily conceive my feelings, but my mind is made up."

"If the Jacobins saw the squadron go, they would rise again and recapture Naples," Emma declared.

Nelson nodded. "I have done what I think right; others may think differently; but it will be my consolation that I have gained a Kingdom and seated a faithful ally of His Majesty firmly on his throne."

Although professing complete confidence in his decision, Nelson appeared uneasy in the days that followed. As usual, mental conflict took toll of his delicate frame.

"I am well aware of the consequences of disobeying my orders; but as I have often before risked my life for a good cause, so I will cheerfully risk my commission; for although a military tribunal may think me a criminal, the world will approve of my conduct."

"There was no choice," Emma emphatically reassured. "Had you obeyed Lord Keith, the King and Queen were undone."

"Nevertheless, my situation is not to be described, but it would not fret me so were I not almost blind and worn out." Nelson held his throbbing head; a half-finished letter lay before him, spoiled by a blot from his inexperienced pen. His face looked grey and drawn, his damaged eye was bloodshot and half closed, the other strained and watering.

Emma impulsively knelt beside his chair and drew his head to rest against her shoulder. "Don't be unhappy, my dear love. Think what you have done for the adorable Queen."

Maria Carolina wrote by every opportunity long letters to her deputy, full of chagrin and anxiety. She resented banishment at Palermo and was dubious about the policy pursued at Naples. Ferdinando and his Ministers vacillated between ferocity and weakness. A gallows stood in Largo del Mercato and a tribunal sat in the Castel del Carmine, rebels were condemned without being present at their trials; others, known to be guilty of treason, were released by virtue of bribes or influence. New conspiracies were discovered daily and the culprits given priority of trial over prisoners mouldering in dungeons or sweltering in the overcrowded *polaccas*. Revolution had made no change in the working of Neapolitan justice.

As Ferdinando warmed to his task, Emma's situation became distressing. Appeals on behalf of prisoners came from wives and daughters, from English sympathizers and from the Queen.

"Everyone seems to think I have some influence over the King, but I have none," she said, voicing her distress to Nelson and Sir William. "The Queen sends a secret letter addressed by Mam wanting me to save Marshal Pignatelli because he is the brother of Prince di Belmonte; and here's a petition signed by all the officers of the *Leviathan* pleading for a family who are prisoners on board, God knows, I would save the innocent if I could."

"But are they innocent, my dear Em?" Sir William inquired. "I find myself the recipient of many memorials and *billets*, but am able to read them with a stony heart, and advise ye to do likewise."

"I wish to God we could go back to Palermo, for the sight of the *polaccas* still filled with prisoners makes me miserable, though I own all are wretches and deserve their fate."

To Emma's joy, Ferdinando announced his return to Sicily after Capua and Gaëta surrendered. In the meantime further letters came from Lord Keith, reiterating his orders.

"Again I must disobey my Commander-in-Chief," Nelson declared.

"Doubtless I shall be on trial for my conduct, while Lord Keith will go uncensored for allowing the French to form their junction with the Dons—such things are."

But reflection, endorsed by Sir William's prudent counsel, eventually modified Nelson's decision; as a sop to discipline and obedience he dispatched Rear-Admiral Duckworth with four Sail of the Line to Minorca.

"I admire Nelson more every day," Sir William assured Emma, "though it requires some temper to stem the torrent of his impetuosity, and in that respect he is just enough to own that I am of infinite use to him."

News that Capua and Gaëta had surrendered was received as the royal party dined on the quarter-deck. It was the 1st of August, and the table was decorated with a silver model of the statue of the Nile in Largo di Nilo. Presented by the royal family, the ornament was accompanied by a letter of gratitude to the "*Defenseur des Deux Sicilies*".

On learning that the enemy was finally defeated, Ferdinando threw his arms round the Hero of the Nile, and kissed him on either cheek. "Dear little Admiral, this anniversary will now be doubly dear to me!"

Nelson, sitting beside the King, was engulfed in the massive embrace. Emerging in blushing confusion, he met Emma's beaming smile. She whispered: "How glorious that this great day be crowned by a second victory, that the last Frenchman is being driven from the Kingdom as we celebrate the Battle of the Nile. My heart is fit to burst with pride in my hero, great, great, glorious Nelson!"

"My dear friend," he responded in a rapid undertone, "it is your praise that I crave, yours, only yours!"

Glass in hand, King Ferdinando stood up to propose the toast of the day. "Receive, most gallant and deserving Admiral, on this ever memorable day, when by your glorious battle you saved Italy, the sincere thanks of a grateful Monarch, attached to you beyond all expression. You and your brave followers have fulfilled the duty enjoined upon you to deliver Naples and the fortresses from the enemy, you support my steps for the re-establishment of order and tranquillity—in short, all the infinite obligations we are under towards you will never be erased from our remembrance. I drink to your health and happiness, my dear Lord; I drink also the toast of your

magnanimous Sovereign, my excellent ally, and of your generous nation!"

As the King drank, a royal salute of twenty-one guns was fired from all the Neapolitan warships and from the castles.

Nelson was too overcome to make a speech in return. With tears rolling down his cheeks he rose to his feet and replied brokenly: "I thank Your Majesty, but I only did as I ought—my duty."

It was the King's custom, and that of his suite, to sleep after dinner, an example followed by Sir William. Emma and Nelson, lingering on the quarter-deck, were alone save for royal servants clearing away the repast. They looked towards the fo'c'sle, where a party of seamen sat cross-legged on the deck, splicing ropes. Tilting his head, Nelson shaded his eyes to look up at the rigging. "Emma!" he cried excitedly, "the white bird!"

She gazed aloft at tapering spars and rigging intricately laced against dazzling sky. "I don't see anything."

"Yes, you *do*—there, perching on the main topping lift."

Following his pointing finger, Emma saw the bird flutter from the rope and settle on the main yard. She watched with wonder and awe.

"Where can it have been all these months—'tis a year almost since it flew away. Nelson, do you think 'tis no mortal bird, but a magic symbol of triumph?"

Nelson answered solemnly: "No other could have survived the shots that fell around it during the battle."

"We'll tell no one what we believe," Emma declared, "for if we do we shall only get laughed at for our pains."

In the evening Naples was again illuminated and processions of lighted boats moved in and out between the warships. At nine o'clock singers and musicians from San Carlo drew alongside the *Foudroyant* performing a piece of music describing the Kingdom's recent distress, "*but Nelson came, the invincible Nelson, and they were preserved, and again made happy.*"

The royal party and all on board leant over the bulwarks to gaze at the marvellous representation of a Roman galley that accommodated the opera company. In the centre was erected a rostral column; at the stern two waxen angels appeared to be flying upward bearing a portrait of Nelson; the whole scene was revealed by more than two thousand variegated lamps suspended round the vessel.

"I've seen many splendid displays in the course of a varied life,"

Sir William assured the King, "but nothing to compare with this beautiful exhibition."

"Is that true?" Ferdinando responded in gratified tones. "But I can assure you this is insignificant to what you will see when we reach Palermo. I have given orders for a reception in sumptuous style, but I say no more, so that the surprise will be the greater."

"I am already overwhelmed," said Nelson. "You may think me vain to enjoy this praise of myself; no, far, very far, from it! I receive the tributes Your Majesty is pleased to pay me with gratitude and humility."

Emma whispered: "Nothing said nor done would be more than your due; great, immortal Nelson!"

The British and Portuguese flagships were to sail from Naples on the 5th of August, leaving the squadron under the command of Captain Troubridge, flying the broad red pennant of a Commodore. The royal party were in good spirits, Emma, particularly, felt happy at the prospect of exchanging cramped quarters for the spaciousness of Palazzo Palagonia. Carry Græffer alone expressed dismay.

"These weeks have been wonderful," she confided to Emma; "for once life has given me what I crave—romance!"

"Do you mean living domestically with a King?" Emma innocently inquired.

"Of course I don't! One would need to be blind, and deaf as well, to call Ferdinando of Naples romantic! No, I mean something very different!"

"Your notions of romance aren't mine!"

"You needn't be a cat, Emma, seeing that in a few days I'll be back in that horrid villa, cooped up with Mr. Græffer. I've told His Majesty that I must have somewhere better to live, and with brighter prospects."

"What did he answer?"

"Said I was never satisfied, and I might find myself in a worse situation."

"If I were you I'd bear that in mind!"

The next morning Emma was roused from slumber by the King's voice raised in shrill falsetto as he passed her cabin; in a moment she heard him volubly addressing Sir William, who responded with unwonted vigour. Together they hastened past her door.

"Your Majesty, it's quite impossible—Caracciolo was well weighted!"

"But I tell you the fisherman saw him rise from the sea, and says he comes swiftly this way, swimming half out of the water!"

"Pshaw!" answered Sir William.

Emma threw on some clothes and rushed on deck, where she found the King, General Acton, Sir William and Captain Hardy gazing through telescopes at a dark object approaching on the larboard quarter. Ferdinando's mottled red face had blanched to the colour of yellow cheese; suddenly his spy-glass clattered to the deck and he staggered backwards. Picking up the instrument, Emma set it to her own eye and saw the face of Caracciolo, much swollen and discoloured, rising out of the water. His eyes protruded from their sockets, his hair lay in black ribbons on his ghastly cheeks, sunlight glinted on the gold rings in his ears and revealed his necklace of *Pinna Marina*—a talisman that preserved the wearer from drowning.

"My God!" cried Emma. "'Tis an apparition, sure enough, and what's to stop it coming on board? What can we do, Sir Will'm? You're the one who laughs at ghosts, but for my part I'd rather meet a party of bandits alone on a dark mountain than face this among company in bright sunshine."

Sir William paid no heed, his attention being fixed on Ferdinando, whose vast bulk was shaking with un-kingly fear. "Tell him to return whence he came; tell him I won't have him here!"

"His spirit cannot rest without your forgiveness, Sire," Sir William diplomatically rejoined.

"I accord it freely, freely!" Lacking courage to look over the side, Ferdinando leant against the mizzen mast and covered his eyes with his hands. Presently he asked: "Has my royal pardon disposed of Caracciolo?"

"Nothing but active measures will do that!" Lord Nelson's voice floated down from the poop.

Everyone looked up at the slight jaunty figure; his nonchalant bearing imparted confidence. Running down the ladder, he crossed the deck to Emma. Together they gazed at the sodden bluish-purple corpse, bobbing up and down twenty yards from the ship. The traitor's flesh, flaking off in strips, was embossed with arrow-like markings impressed by the feet of sea-birds.

"Good God! What should bring Caracciolo here? Was the sea not wide enough to hold him?" Emma demanded of anyone who listened. "Nelson, can nothing be done to sink him again, for I vow

I shall go mad if I watch much longer, yet watch I must if he stays round the ship."

"I've ordered a boat to tow him to Santa Lucia; General Acton says the body will be received at the fisherman's church."

"I know all the drowned go there, but will they take a traitor?"

"Time—a very short time—will secure a place for Caracciolo in the gallery of Neapolitan martyrs, or I am much mistaken. Italians cannot bear to see themselves, or their history, in any guise but the heroic."

At Sir William's suggestion, the party repaired to breakfast while seamen from the *Foudroyant* towed the gruesome remains to Christian burial. Emma was unable to eat, but no other appetites recoiled from the good things served by the royal cooks, Ferdinando devoured six red mullets and a young chicken before declaring himself recovered from his recent shock and ready to harpoon sword-fish in the bay. He set out in the small cutter, accompanied by Sir John Acton and Prince Castelcicala; Emma rejoiced to see them go. Providing herself with an umbrella and a chair dragged from the great cabin, she settled down to read. The quarter-deck was deserted; down in the waist Captain Hardy inspected bolts of Neapolitan canvas just delivered from the dockyard. It was hot and pleasant, a light breeze ruffled Emma's curls and played upon the rigging with a humming note. Presently she heard the splash of oars, and looked up to see the small barge returning from the shore. The coxswain climbed aboard carrying a double-headed Neapolitan shot attached to a length of rope, which he presented to Captain Hardy; Emma's curiosity was aroused, and she left her book to descend to the lower deck. At the bottom of the stairs she met Nelson coming from the coach; together they approached a group of officers and seamen watching Captain Hardy weighing the shot on a massive pair of scales.

"A hundred and fifty pounds," he announced, "and if anyone had told me that a body could rise so encumbered, I'd have dubbed him a liar to his face!"

"Yet the incredible has happened—as it so often does," said Nelson.

Emma picked up the rope and hastily dropped it on seeing a piece of skin adhering to it. "Has the priest agreed to give a traitor Christian burial? He has? Mercy be! Now perhaps Caracciolo will stay quiet in his grave and disturb us no more."

Haunted by the experience, Emma was thankful when the time came to leave the bay. After three days at sea the *Foudroyant* hove-to off Monte Pellegrino until the Queen and the royal family came on board.

Maria Carolina kissed Emma on both cheeks. "My dear Miledi, my grateful heart will never forget your services for me, but I know your excellent disposition, and take advantage."

Emma responded with a beaming smile. "I can tell you that between us we did some good, for not a penny of the ducats you sent was wasted, and a multitude had reason to thank their stars for a compassionate Queen."

A triumphal landing-place of stucco and gilt was erected opposite Porta Felice whereon were assembled the senate of Palermo, wearing togas, the High-Admiral dressed in a splendid uniform, Sicilian notabilities in richly embroidered clothes, and lastly Mrs. Cadogan in black lace over purple satin. The gown was thick for a broiling day, and Emma, stepping ashore from Lord Nelson's barge, was alarmed by her mother's scarlet face.

"Mam, 'tis joyful to come back to you, but why do you grill yourself in a winter gown, when you have summer things a-plenty?"

"Because 'tis all I have in the mourning line—Lady Knight was buried last evening, and Miss Cornelia is with us according to Sir Will'um's instructions."

"Good God!" Emma ejaculated. Her eyes were on the King and Queen and their family, climbing into state coaches that would convey them to a solemn *Te Deum* at the cathedral. "I wish I could go home with you, Mam, but nothing will suit the Queen but me driving in the procession with Lord Nelson and Sir Will'um."

"And very proper!" said Mrs. Cadogan energetically. "Without you to make favour for Her Majesty, 'tis unlikely things would have gone so well. Emma, I'm proud of you!"

The *Te Deum* sung in thanksgiving for the recovery of the Neapolitan throne inaugurated a series of fêtes, illuminations and fireworks which coincided with the festa of Santa Rosalia. Chanting priests carried the holy bones through streets crowded with holiday-makers who thought it no sin to pelt the cavalcade with sugar plums and confetti. Palazzo Palagonia evoked greater interest, than the familiar reliquæ; crowds surged round the garden gates hoping to catch a glimpse of the great British Admiral who had recovered Naples and to watch courtiers arriving with gifts. For her zeal in

the King's service, Emma received Ferdinando's picture set with diamonds; the Queen even more generously acknowledged the exertions of her deputy by presents of diamond and pearl earrings, an aigrette, a pair of bracelets set with Carolina's miniature and hair, a cypher in diamonds and a dress of finest point lace. A ring worth a thousand pounds was bestowed on Sir William for his part in the recovery of the Kingdom. To Lord Nelson the royal gratitude was conveyed in an even more delicate manner by Prince Luzzi, Secretary of State, who brought title-deeds of the Duchy of Bronte.

"I am not surprised by this," said Sir William, warmly shaking the Admiral's hand. "Before leaving Naples His Majesty told me of his intention to create you Duke of Bronte, after the estate of that name at the foot of Etna, to which, I have since ascertained, he has attached a feud of approximately three thousand pounds a year."

Nelson looked provoked by the mercenary imputation. "It has been honour, and not money, which I have sought, nor sought in vain. I might have received money and jewels, but I rejected them as became me, and never received one farthing for all the expenses of the royal family on board the *Vanguard* and *Foudroyant*."

"My dear Nelson, no one knows better than I your disinterested character. But sordid details must be considered if one wishes to live at ease in this world. I hate thinking of money as much as any man, but circumstances have forced me to the necessity, and I should rejoice to feel ye need not be harassed in your later days as I am now."

Nelson's chagrin persisted, and he unbosomed himself to Emma on her return from the palace.

"One would think money was the most important factor in the universe and that Sir William was faced with destitution. I sometimes find difficulty in containing myself when you are refused everything on grounds of expense; I believe he thinks that a little candle-light and iced water will ruin him. Now I am credited with similar motives: a fief of three thousand a year he believes will cause me greater satisfaction than His Sicilian Majesty's delicate acknowledgment of my endeavours by creating me Duke of Bronte."

"Never mind," said Emma; "Sir William grows old and has much to vex him, and truly his losses have been heavy. Thank God he gives up until next spring the idea of going home to look into his affairs, for he'd surely die of an English winter after sunny Naples. As for me, I should never survive parting from you, my dear, ever dear, Nelson!"

"Bronte Nelson in future!" he laughed.

"Or shall it be Nelson and Bronte? That way sounds prettier, and leaves your Emma with a choice of names. Would you believe it? I have known for five whole days that you were going to be a duke, yet I kept the secret as the Queen bade me. She told me as a special mark of favour and explained that the title and the duchy with its revenues will pass to your heirs, and would have me tell her if Lady Nelson be too old to bear you a son." Emma's voice and manner had become tense.

Nelson stood a moment without speaking: he drew his breath unevenly and glanced at Emma's averted face. Presently he dropped his hand on hers and gripped it until his knuckles showed whitely through the skin. "You speak as though that were a possibility, yet you know that there is now no other woman for me but you, and I can have no son unless you bear me one."

"Do you swear that is true?"

"Aye—I swear it!"

"If such a miracle happened we could not own to it!"

"Cheer up, fair Emma! Who knows what joys the future holds in store?"



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

NELSON, accompanied by Sir William and Emma, paid his first visit to Bronte in mid-September. The farm, a long, low structure with faded pink walls, stood amid vineyards on the lower slopes of Mount Etna. Ramshackle doors and windows opened upon a dusty yard littered with old casks, cart-wheels, wine-stained wood and heaps of sodden grape-skins. The first sight of his estate greatly subdued the hero, whose expectations had been fanned by Ferdinando's praise of his royal gift. Disappointment was increased by reports from John Græffer, installed as bailiff at the King's request.

"There's not a dwelling on the estate that is better than a hovel," he declared. "The farmer in Sicily lives in the town, and so do all the labourers; if the wind blows a little fresh on Monday morning, none venture to leave the market-place, and when they do move they arrive half tired. This accursed custom, detrimental as it is to the advantage of agriculture, does not meet with any reproach."

"The system shall be altered at Bronte," Nelson firmly announced. "Under your guidance, Mr. Græffer, the Duchy shall be managed in the English way. I will build cottages fit for my workmen to live in, and I shall take no income from the property until my people are so comfortable that they will feel a pride in working for its prosperity."

"Pray begin your improvements here, My Lord," Carry petulantly intervened, "for I declare the house will not be fit to live in during the rainy season."

To Emma, Carry was more explicit: "'Tis all a trick of the King's to plant me in this tumble-down back-of-beyond. By transferring the payment of Mr. Græffer's salary to Lord Nelson he rids himself of an obligation and escapes my tongue, for I can tell you, Emma, I never allow His Majesty to forget what is due to me and my dear Caroline."

Despite the shortcomings of the farm-house, the Duke and his party succeeded in enjoying themselves. Sir William slept on the *loggia*, determined to benefit from country air. Emma and Nelson occupied rooms at either end of the long building.

"How fortunate that the corridor is paved with marble which does not creak!" said Nelson gaily. "Such a lengthy promenade supplies sufficient dangers, and I fear it more than a broadside from the enemy."

After riding over the estate, Sir William formed a favourable opinion of Bronte's financial prospects. "And I count myself something of an expert, having seen my own estate in Pembrokeshire develop from a small hamlet into a packetport of consequence."

"But that was Greville's doing," said Emma eagerly. "Were he here to advise, we could plan something quite extraordinary in the money-making way."

"I don't desire to profit at the expense of the Brontese," Nelson angrily responded.

"Observe how our friend fires up!" chuckled Sir William. "What could be more appropriate than his new title? Brontes, or Thunder, was the name of one of the Cyclops, fabled to have wrought in Sicily the trident of Neptune and the thunderbolts of Jupiter."

Emma clapped her hands. "Now we know what to call him, Sir Will'um! He shall be My Lord Thunder, or, by way of variety, the Great Jove."

After the brief holiday the vexations of an indefinite command appeared all the more provoking. "It is now six weeks since Lord Keith passed the Straits, yet I have heard nothing of his movements," Nelson complained. "I am in a most unsatisfactory position, but must do the best which my judgment points out."

"Like myself, my dear Nelson, ye serve an ungrateful Government," Sir William responded. "For the past seven years no one has laboured harder in the good cause than I; more than once I have been of essential service, and they know it at home, but I have never yet had the smallest encouragement from my superiors. However, none can rob us of the inward satisfaction of duty well done; all the same, this is a damn'd world, and no matter how soon one gets out of it!"

"I agree with all you say," Lord Nelson gloomily replied. "I have just received their Lordship's disapprobation of my conduct in having sent a part of the crews of the squadron against Capua, and

directions not to employ them in like manner in future. Also I get rebuked for disobeying Lord Keith's orders and leaving Minorca exposed to the risk of attack. My reply will be that Capua and Gaëta would now be in French hands had I withdrawn the force landed from the squadron."

"In England all minds are closed to everything but the dangers of invasion."

"Aye—Captain Gore's report of the combined fleets sailing and of their being past Cape St. Vincent on July the 24th has put the whole kingdom in alarm. As the enemy had the advantage of a good wind, there is little hope that Lord Keith overtook them. Every small vessel has been sent forth to collect our scattered ships, and to prepare Ireland for the damned event."

"If Britain is attacked, we are undone here!" Emma ejaculated. "All our hard labour gone for nothing! Can't we get on, Nelson, and fix the business of Malta before the enemy have time to turn about?"

"I will strain every nerve to get Malta before the bad weather sets in, but one can expect little aid from this country, and only increased force will terminate Captain Ball's long siege. Troubridge also has claims on me to carry out his attack on Cività Vecchia. Where can I look for help? Their Sicilian Majesties count much on the Russians—Admiral Ouschakoff is certainly anxious to get Valletta because the Czar is named *Grand Master*! How the islanders will act on learning that the Order is to be re-established I know not. They have dread of their former oppressors, and of their own accord elect our friend Ball 'Chief of the Maltese'."

"And who could be a better Sovereign?" Emma demanded. "If I were Ferdinando I'd make the island into a little kingdom with Captain Ball its Monarch."

Throughout September Palermo languished in hot, moist heat that the English found hard to bear. The barometer at Palazzo Palagonia daily registered a temperature of 90°, the whole household was indisposed and only pursued their duties through strength of will. Lord Nelson transacted all business from the house in the absence of the *Foudroyant*, detached under Captain Hardy to convey the King and Queen of Sardinia from their retreat at Cagliari to Leghorn, a happy return to His Majesty's Piedmontese dominions recently recovered by the combined Austrian and Russian armies under Field-Marshal Suvárov.

"I suppose we may flatter ourselves that all is drawing to a favour-

able conclusion in this theatre," Sir William sighed, mopping his streaming brow. "The Austrians advance in numbers and with hasty strides to take possession of Tuscany and as much of the Roman State as they can."

Nelson nodded agreement. "The Austrian eagle wishes to cover with his wings more than I think the other powers will allow, but our dear Troubridge can be trusted to keep such ambitions within bounds—every hour I hope to hear he has got hold of *Cività Vecchia*."

Emma looked up from a translation she was making. "Do you remember the prophecy by Father McCormick, the Irish friar who came to congratulate you on the Battle of the Nile? He said: 'What you have done is great, but you will do a greater thing—you will take Rome with your ships'."

"That certainly was most extraordinary, and I thought it quite foolish at the time."

After the capture of Naples the squadron under Commodore Troubridge had proceeded to blockade the principal sea-port of the Pope's dominions, still in French possession. To encourage an insurrection, three hundred marines had landed under Captain Louis of the *Minotaur*, while Cardinal Ruffo marched with his Calabrese over the Roman border. The Neapolitan force met early defeat from the French and their Roman partisans; the British were more successful, and before the end of the month the city of Rome and the port of *Cività Vecchia* capitulated to Commodore Troubridge.

"There now!" Emma cried triumphantly. "Wasn't Father McCormick right when he said you would take Rome with your ships?"

Lord Nelson's intention to hoist the Pope's colours over the Vatican was frustrated by a report that Pius VI had died in captivity at Valence.

"General Acton says if there is no Pope it should be the Cross Keys without the Tiara," Nelson informed his friends, "but that matter must be left to the Court—I have more to think about than such formalities. Two Venetian Ships of the Line and five vessels loaded with provisions are waiting at Toulon to relieve Malta. If the French succeed, not all our forces got together could take the island. Nothing shall be wanting on my part, but I am almost mad with the manner of going on here. The King claims to be Sovereign, yet cannot be driven to assist the poor Maltese."

"The whole manner of conduct is most provoking," said Sir Wil-

liam. "Especially His Majesty's reluctance to return with his Court to Naples—he knows he could not lead the same dissipated life there as formerly."

Emma eagerly intervened: "The Queen persuades him to go, though declaring she never can be happy after the ingratitude and ill-usage she has met with from the Neapolitans. She agrees that a better government should be instituted and present conditions are truly terrible. Women and children of the first rank are in actual want, as no provision is made for families of rebels whose estates are confiscated. One can guess how bad it is from what we see here—no pity is shown for Luigia Sanfelice whom they have brought from Naples to be examined by the Queen's physician because Ferdinando would not believe Luigia was with child. Now he knows it is so, he vows she shall be executed the moment she is delivered. Her Majesty pleads that Luigia has suffered enough, having caused the deaths of both her Royalist and Republican lovers."

"The Sanfelice knew the risk when she allured a Royalist in order to discover his party's secrets for her Parthenopean paramour," Sir William answered tersely. "Knowing her past record, I cannot feel much worked up by her fate."

"You're hard, Sir Will'um!" Emma cried indignantly. "Nelson, don't you think it cruel to tell a woman she must hang when her baby is born?"

Nelson flushed and looked unhappy. "The Sanfelice was treacherous to her country and her lover both—she deserves her fate."

"Good God! I think you two very heartless!" Emma pouted and bit her full red lip.

"Don't say that! I never could desire a woman to suffer unless she acted a villain's part!"

A report that an enemy fleet of thirteen Sail of the Line had been sighted off Cape Ortegal on the 18th of September brought Nelson to a quick decision.

"The moment the *Foudroyant* arrives I shall sail for Mahon, and probably to Gibraltar; if I can but get a force to fight these fellows, it shall be done quickly. I am in dread for our outward bound convoys, which number seven hundred sail under a few frigates, it being thought in England that all the force was at Brest."

"Are ye gathering together the whole squadron?" Sir William asked apprehensively.

"Except from Malta—that I shall never take away till we have reduced it. To my dismay, the Marquis de Niza and his squadron is ordered home, it being believed in Lisbon that the ships are no longer necessary. I have required him to stay—if the Marquis withdrew his people I do not see how Ball could hold his ground under La Valletta. 'Tis true we have the Russians, but Admiral Ouschakoff cannot keep the sea in winter, and I observe no desire to go to sea in summer."

Emma was greatly distressed at Nelson's sudden decision. "Must you always be outnumbered, my dear love?" she demanded. "Never think that your Emma would keep you from glory, but her fond heart faints when picturing your small squadron opposed to such a great fleet."

"Do not fear. My poorest ship is better than any five of the enemy, for she is manned by British seamen who cannot be beaten."

The *Foudroyant* sailed on October the 5th. She left harbour with her band playing and dressed in colours in honour of the Hereditary Prince whose birthday it was. Emma stood on the mole with the royal family, who had breakfasted on board.

The Queen clutched her friend's arm. "Miledi, I feel we are abandoned! Lost!"

"Milord never forsakes his friends, he protects us best by seeking out the enemy!"

"I know his valour, therefore I tremble that he leaves us," said Carolina, shaking with the ague.

Emma's eyes filled with tears, which imparted a queer distorted outline to the gaily decorated ship sailing into the blue horizon. Impatience made her anxious to shake off the plump white hand, clutching with weak insistence. To be alone was what she wanted. . . . To be alone to remember the night that had passed. . . . To be alone to weep and to pray. . . . But the Queen required company. . . .

"Miledi, I ordered a little luncheon at the palace; wine and the liver wing of a chicken for you; for me a glass of iced water and a nectarine. I have much to discuss, and you, my dear Miledi, are my only friend. I am alone, utterly alone. My troubles cannot be spoken of to my daughters—they are too young, too innocent."

The meal was served in a small room looking upon the palace square; the shutters and windows were closed, yet it was suffocatingly hot. Emma mopped her perspiring face; Caroline lavishly powdered her puffy features. Her prominent eyes stared enviously at the Eng-

lishwoman. "You can afford to be natural—how fortunate you are! In my position one must conceal everything!"

"'Tis very bad for the skin," Emma responded absently.

"But more injurious to the character invariably to act a part. Yesterday I was very feverish and really ill; I fear I shall never recover. Were it not for my children I should wish to bid adieu to the world." The Queen paused and sipped iced water. "Miledi, I arranged this informal tête-à-tête in order to give a friendly warning. As you know, many of the worst Neapolitan Jacobins escaped during the last hours of the Parthenopean Republic; some found their way to Paris, others to London. In both capitals they spread stories detrimental to me, and also to you, Miledi. I am accused of being a monster of cruelty and responsible for every punishment inflicted on the rebels; you are said to be my tool and the mistress of our gallant Admiral."

Emma started and dropped her knife with a clatter.

"You may well look dismayed, for the Marchese Circello says the stories are generally credited, especially at the Court of St. James's. There are rumours that Sir William is to be recalled to England and Milord Nelson relieved of his command."

"My God!"

"You may well look aghast; if either calamity happens, this kingdom ceases to exist."

"I must warn Sir Will'um!"

"Do not, Miledi, but be ready to counter any action taken by your Downing Street. Lady Nelson, I understand, is using her influence with Admirals of high standing!"

"I always hated her!"

"One never cares for the wife of a lover."

Emma looked drearily at the chicken-bone on her plate and again muttered: "My God!"

"The more ridiculous the stories circulated by the Jacobins, the more they are believed," said Carolina angrily. "Intelligence that the garrisons in Nuovo and dell' Uovo had surrendered with the honours of war is supposed to have reached me while Milord Nelson was sailing to Naples, whereupon I sent you in pursuit in a fast sailing corvette with instructions to nullify the treaty and wreak vengeance on the rebels. According to the canard, you came up with the *Foudroyant* as Milord viewed through his telescope the flags of truce flying on the fortresses; finding he would not yield to entreaties, you lured him into his cabin and locked the door. An hour later you emerged dis-

arrayed and listened triumphantly to an order that the flags of truce should be shot down."

Emma cried impulsively: "What a lie! Nelson was my lover before we ever sailed to Naples."

"I know!" said the Queen. "But that is of no consequence, the important thing is the calumny against me. I, Carolina of Naples, am accused of employing you to overthrow the Cardinal's infamous treaty with the rebels. Is justice only to be obtained through subordinates? *Mon Dieu!* Is no indignity to be spared me?"

"'Tis worse for us who are English! Lord Nelson may be disgraced, Sir Will'um ruined, as for me I should be quite undone. Oh God, what shall I do? What *can* I do?"

For a few seconds Emma and the Queen gazed despairingly at each other. Carolina was the first to decide on a course of action.

"We will say nothing to anyone at present, Miledi," she said hoarsely. "When dispatches come from England closely observe the Chevalier, and judge by his manner if this horrible canard is recorded. If he betrays no uneasiness, all may pass tranquilly. In my life I have been vilified and abused, yet I persevered and survive to do my duty."

"I should be thankful indeed not to speak of the matter to Nelson!"

"In affairs of the heart it is fatal to defame yourself, but if slander trumpets without, you can be assured it will call our hero's chivalry to action. Miledi Nelson's ill-judged interference may permanently transfer her husband's loyalty. Alas! misfortune has taught me much, but past errors enable me to place my sad experience at the disposal of a dear friend."

The conversation left Emma vastly uneasy. Surreptitiously she watched for any change in Sir William's manner. He was ill and frequently impatient, but there was nothing to indicate doubt or jealousy.

"There are times, my dear Em, when I regret that we did not return home in the *Goliath*. Captain Foley must be well on his voyage by now; had we gone with him I should be free from bilious complaints and diarrhœa, which do not give me a moment's peace. I was well on board the ship in the bay of Naples."

"You weighed all circumstances, Sir Will'um, and when it came to the point decided you would not forsake Nelson, who said fairly that if we went he could not stay."

"The Court also was alarmed at our going," Sir William added

with satisfaction. "However low we may be at home, here we are respected indeed! My career finished most gloriously, and I am sure my name will ever be remembered in the Two Sicilies."

"Low at home, Sir Will'um?" Emma sharply queried. "I thought we was universally respected for the great services we render our country. Why, 'tis but four months since Greville wrote: 'All admire Lady Hamilton's conduct, and the Prince of Wales, of his own accord, said she might be assured that all would be most pleasing to her when she arrived in England.' If that didn't mean a welcome at St. James's, what does, Sir Will'um?"

"My dear Em, sentiment at Court is liable to instant change—in four months opinion may be quite reversed. For that reason I am neither elated nor depressed, knowing it to be fickle as the wind."

"Then we are not so well thought of as we were?"

"Apparently not, my dear. Jacobin rebels on arrival in England at once revenged themselves by attacking our reputations and Lord Nelson's."

"But, Sir Will'um, 'tis terrible!"

"Pshaw! Pay no heed—I do not."

Emma was partially reassured; her anxious thoughts were freed to follow Nelson, sailing to meet the enemy. Good God! Why was it always his unlucky fate to be outnumbered in ships and guns. Suppose a time should come when British seamanship and British courage should not suffice to beat a superior foe? . . .

Sweltering, steamy heat continued, and Sir William was brought so low that he had to keep his bed. Emma sat at his desk dealing with diplomatic business and opening letters and dispatches addressed to Nelson. In this way she learnt that King George had been pleased to make a baronet of Commodore Troubridge, and Buonaparte was reported to have passed Corsica in a bomb vessel, steering for France. Sir William acknowledged the information with a groan.

"Can't you rouse up a little, Sir Will'um? Here's an urgent letter from Captain Ball saying the Maltese are in such distress for food that he will not answer for the consequences unless assistance is sent quickly. The island may be lost! What are we to do? How can the poor people be expected to go on fighting if none show interest in their sufferings?"

"Go and see General Acton," Sir William muttered through dry lips.

"That I shan't! We've tried him before and got no satisfaction. 'Tis

a month since Nelson was promised that corn loaded for Regusa, but it still lies in the port, while the Maltese starve! ”

“Then ye must manage the matter as ye see fit—I am beyond it!”

Sir William turned his sallow face to the wall. Seeking coolness, he had discarded his night-shirt; his shoulder-blades looked as if they would break through his stretched yellow skin.

Emma rose and clapped a large straw hat on her damp curls. “If nothing else can be done I shall buy the corn myself!”

“That will cost ye something like five hundred pounds!”

“You can laugh, Sir Will’um, but I shall manage somehow if I have a mind to!”

It was the hour of the *siesta*, and Emma found the quay deserted. Hot stones scorched through her light slippers, sunshine burnt her bare arms. One of the *polaccas* was tied to the jetty, a plank made a bridge over the strip of water. Espying the master asleep on deck, she gingerly tested the board’s strength, and, finding it would bear her weight, tripped nimbly across. Neither shouts nor pokes roused the sleeping man; finally she gave him a prod in the belly with the point of her parasol. Swearing, he leapt to his feet, flourishing a stiletto.

“For God’s sake put that aside and don’t act so foolish. I’ve come to talk business and put you in the way of a neat little fortune. What price do you ask to deliver your cargo of corn to Captain Ball, Chief of the Maltese?”

The man looked sullen, but he lowered his knife and started to sharpen the blade on the sole of his foot. “Three thousand six hundred ducats.”

“Good God!” Emma gasped, paused, and then said firmly: “I buy all in the name of England, on condition that ye weigh and sail for St. Paul’s Bay before sundown.”

The Sicilian’s eyes glinted. “First must be delivered payment in gold.”

“Of course—I myself shall bring the money!”

With great dignity Emma retraced her steps to Porta Felice, where she engaged a carriage to take her to the palace. The Queen had just awakened, and was not well pleased at being disturbed.

“I know I’ve come at an ill moment, ma’am, but I could not choose. Your Majesty, the fate of Malta is at stake. The islanders verge on starvation, and Captain Ball says if they do not receive corn quickly they may give up and join the French, so great is their extremity.”

"The French can do little for them—two months ago the garrison had eaten all the cats and dogs and were starting on the rats."

"A plump rat may taste good if one is famished, but the Maltese lack even vermin. They fight in open country that is rocky and unsympathetic to life. However, I have brought an end to their tribulations by prompt measures; for three thousand six hundred ducats the *polacca* of corn in the harbour is ours!"

The Queen screamed: "Where is the money coming from, Miledi? Have you thought of that?"

"We must find it somehow and refund ourselves afterwards from the British Government or King Ferdinando. It must be done, or all may be lost!"

"You told me that *last* Spring, Miledi, and I gave seven thousand ounces. But General Vaubois still maintains himself in La Vallette, and the Maltese still threaten to join him unless they are fed. Nobody has refunded me, and I will not again rob my children."

"Then I must manage myself," Emma returned philosophically. "I've got twelve hundred ducats—that leaves two thousand four hundred to make up—roughly three hundred and sixty-six pounds English."

In describing the scene afterwards to Sir William she said: "The Queen looked quite terrified, but I told her I could manage very well by borrowing from Gibbs and Noble. And that's what I did! Mr. Abraham Gibbs lent me four hundred pounds for three months without interest, so I shall have thirty-four pounds in my pocket."

"Emma, your impetuosity will get us into serious trouble! Ye know that I am already embarrassed for money, yet ye involve me in fresh commitments without even consulting me beforehand."

"I haven't involved you in anything, Sir Will'um! You never say how clever I was to have a hundred and fifty pounds. 'Twas part of the five hundred that Nelson gave me on my birthday six months ago—if such saving is not prudence, I don't know what is!"

"But ye borrowed four hundred with no prospect of repaying!"

"No prospect? But there you are wrong, Sir Will'um! Should the worst come to the worst Nelson will pay Mr. Gibbs. If he can afford to let Lady Nelson keep and disburse ten thousand pounds from the East India Company, surely he will take pleasure to pay a paltry four hundred borrowed by Emma Hamilton for the great cause we all serve!"

And so it proved. Nelson returned to Palermo on the 22nd of October after a cruise of eighteen days, lamenting:

"I am yet in total darkness regarding the enemy's movements. On the 12th I fell in with the *Bulldog*, having on board Sir Ed'ard Berry, who brought letters from Rear-Admiral Duckworth discrediting the account of an enemy fleet off the coast of Portugal. But the lack of accurate information puts me mightily out of humour. To say truth, I am most heartily tired of the war, for our Allies have, in too many instances, played us foul."

"Continental nations have ever been famed for duplicity, but we must take them as they are and rub along with them as best we can," Sir William philosophically remarked.

"I echo Admiral Blake's words when addressing his captains in 1653: 'It is not for us to mind affairs of state, but to keep foreigners from fooling us'."

"Then watch the Austrians, who hope to realize the Hapsburgs' century-old ambition to seize central and southern Italy and the command of the Mediterranean."

Nelson gloomily rejoined: "I know the Court of Vienna has brought more troops into the neighbourhood of Rome and is raising disturbances and discontents against the Neapolitan Government with the object of inciting the Romans to call for protection."

"In which case the Austrians will take possession of the capital and oblige the Neapolitans to retire!"

"At the same time the Austrian Generals in the Riviera of Genoa call loudly for naval co-operation from me, although the Russians have an Admiral and squadron on the coast."

For several minutes there was no sound but the creak of Emma's pen moving across Sir William's dispatch paper. Pausing to turn a page she said: "If Sir Ed'ard Berry returns as your Flag-Captain, what becomes of dear Captain Hardy?"

"Hardy is due to go home; in the meantime I have given him the frigate *Princess Charlotte*. Now that I know Lord St. Vincent still retains the Mediterranean command I can only grant acting orders."

"I feel for you indeed!" Sir William commiserated. "Between ourselves, ye have been vastly ill-used. Have ye news of Lord Keith?"

"He arrived in Torbay on August the 17th—not a word said against him. My conduct is measured by the common rule of law, when I think it should be by that of common sense. By breach of orders I restored a faithful ally; by obedience against his own sense Lord Keith

lost a fleet. One is censured, thus the other must be approved. Such things are!"

"Governments make ungrateful masters," Sir William agreed.

Although smarting under injustice, Nelson enthusiastically endorsed Emma's action in procuring supplies for Malta. "All you do is right, and I am surprised at Sir William not applauding as I do. I shall write to the Emperor of Russia recommending that in his capacity of Grand Master he honours both you and the Queen with the decoration of the Order. I can answer that none ever more deserved the cross."

Emma caught her breath rapturously. "Do you think there's a chance of it? If I was decorated, sure Queen Charlotte would have to receive me at St. James's."

"As the Emperor will owe his new dignity to our exertions he can hardly disoblige me. Not one thing has been done by Russia. In addition to Captain Ball's hard fag I have just made representations to the General at Mahon asking for a force of British troops together with cannons and bombs to finish the business at Malta. 'Twill be hard indeed if the Grand Master does not show gratitude."

Nelson made it his first care to repay the money borrowed by Emma, and insisted on making up her personal contribution to five hundred pounds. She was not embarrassed by scruples that prompted refusal of the original gift.

"Now I am rich I can afford to be reckless," she announced. "For months I've avoided the assembly rooms because I hadn't money to gamble with—if that's not self-denial I don't know what is!"

Emma became a frequent visitor at the *Accademia de' Nobili*. Her luck was in the ascendant, and she generally found herself richer after an evening's play. Impressed by her mounting stock of gold, Sir William abandoned his quiet rubber of whist to join the noisy throng playing *rouge et noir*. Fortune attended him; feverish patches burnt in his sallow cheeks as he raked in heaps of Spanish pistoles, Sicilian ducats, Turkish xeriffs and Russian imperials.

"If this goes on I shall be able to return to England in a creditable manner. I frankly own there is nothing I fear more than debt."

His speech provoked the fickle goddess. He began to lose, not only his gains, but money borrowed from his friend the Admiral. Sitting behind a pile of gold, Lord Nelson nodded half asleep in a chair between the players. When Emma ran short of funds she boldly helped herself; Sir William also took what he wanted, but left in exchange

hastily scribbled I.O.U.'s. As the candles guttered to their end and the emptying rooms swayed in flickering shadows, Nelson crumpled the slips of paper in his hand and flung them amid drops of white wax that formed dangerous circles beneath the chandeliers. Enemies of Britain watched with malicious satisfaction. Stories detrimental to the Hamiltons and Nelson were passed around by the cosmopolitan company assembled at Palermo. Some of the tales reached Emma's ears, and she repeated them with apparent gusto.

"Would you believe this? I had it from the tenor Ettore Monzani who overheard two women talking in the foyer. One said: 'This is the latest from Palazzo Palagonia. The Duca di Bronte accused the Ambassador of stealing five hundred ducats from his pile of gold, whereupon Sir Will'um challenged him to a duel and ran him through the cod'."

"My dear Emma!" said Sir William in shocked protest.

"I didn't say it, I only repeat a vulgar canard. I thought you would be amused—I am!" She laughed boisterously but without mirth.

"To me such idle gossip is vastly unpleasing, but I too can repeat another falsehood that is going the rounds—it is that Lady Hamilton gambles with Lord Nelson's money to the tune of five hundred pounds a night!"

"Good God! What a lie!"

"So you see, my dear Em, one can go on indefinitely and arrive at nothing but vexation."

Stories fabricated for local entertainment travelled beyond the confines of the Valle di Mazara and reached Sir Thomas Troubridge at Messina, embarking British troops for the siege of La Vallette. The outspoken sea officer sat down and wrote boldly to his Commander-in-Chief:

"Pardon me, my lord, it is my sincere esteem for you that makes me mention it. I know you can have no pleasure sitting up all night at cards; why, then, sacrifice your health, comfort, purse, ease, everything, to the customs of a country, where your stay cannot be long? I would not, my lord, reside in this country for all Sicily. I trust the war will soon be over, and deliver us from a nest of everything that is infamous, and that we may enjoy the smiles of our countrywomen. Your lordship is a stranger to half that happens, or the talk it occasions; if you knew what your friends feel for you, I am sure you would cut all the nocturnal parties. The gambling of the people at

Palermo is publicly talked of everywhere. I beseech your lordship leave off. I wish my pen could tell you my feelings. I am sure you would oblige me. I trust your lordship will pardon me; it is the sincere esteem I have for you that makes me risk your displeasure—I really feel for the country. How can things go on? . . . I see that the poor inhabitants of Malta are to be sacrificed. If the supplies are stopped, I cannot leave my soldiers to be starved, though I shall have the painful task of abandoning the inhabitants to their fate. I beseech your lordship, press for a yes, or no. The cries of hunger are now too great to admit of the common evasive answers usually given by the Sicilian government. Do not suffer them to throw the odium on us. If they say we shall not or cannot be supplied, I see nothing for it but to retreat as fast as possible. The villainous set at Naples will undo very soon all that we have done. Nothing but the King's going there can possibly save his country."

Lord Nelson read the letter while breakfasting on the *loggia* with Emma and Sir William. He flushed as his eye travelled down the page, but he mentioned only the last part of the letter.

"Dear Troubridge voices what troubles us all—the desperate plight of the brave Maltese and the King's reluctance to return to Naples which sinks beneath the universal corruption. I must suppose His Majesty has reasons with which I am unacquainted."

"*The truth is he has a very proper sense of danger,*" Sir William answered. "Our best policy is to speak our minds pretty freely to General Acton. Although it is impossible to defend Acton's conduct throughout, I must own my partiality for him."

"You've always been quite silly in that way," Emma tartly observed.

"Perhaps! I may be wrong, but I think him an honest man. The General is certainly the only man of business in this country, though I'll allow he is justly reproached by the opposite party for undertaking everything, excluding everybody and not finishing anything himself."

Nelson gloomily summed up: "In short, a fiddler."

Anxieties continued to be many and manifold. Hopes had not materialised of obtaining a large body of troops from Mahon; the force on the way from Messina was too small to guarantee the fall of Malta. The King and Sir John Acton still expected miracles from Russian troops and Russian ships.

"Like our Admiralty, they naturally think that eleven Sail of the Line, frigates, *et cetera*, should do something," said Nelson. "I find they do nothing. The Russians were to sail from Naples on November the 17th at latest, and they are still here this day, the 18th of December! Altogether the conduct of Admiral Ouchakoff is very high, on every occasion where things do not go to his mind he says: 'I will go away to Corfu,' holding this language as a kind of threat."

Sir William answered: "The Russian Admiral has a polished exterior, but the bear is close to the skin."

"I should not care what he chose to do, had I the means to be independent, but I have not. The demands made on me are greater than I can meet, and now my small force is to be still further reduced by the loss of the Portuguese squadron recalled to Lisbon as unfit for further duty."

Nelson's chagrin was intensified by the Queen's account of affairs in France.

"Buonaparte lost no time!" she muttered. "He, his *État Major*, and three Generals, landed at Toulon in early October, and on November the 9th he was at Paris overthrowing the Directory with the aid of his brother Lucien and the Abbé Sièyes. He has named himself First Consul—peace for the Republic he declares to be his only object. I know better! Buonaparte abandoned the Egyptian army in order to command another to be thrown against Italy—I was never duped into believing that the Corsican would perish in Egypt."

Nelson looked piqued. "Only my lack of cruisers permitted his escape!"

"We lose always through lack of arms, supplies, money, everything!" the Queen petulantly retorted. "The French are not thus hampered; robbery has made them powerful!"

Nelson left the interview much depressed. "I should not be scolded," he protested to Emma. "My heart is susceptible and true, it cannot bear to be misjudged."

Emma hastened to excuse her royal friend. "She has enough to rile her and make her unreasonable. Intrigues go on everywhere, nothing is right at Naples, and she fears the result of making Prince Caparo Captain General, which, as she truly says, is but another name for Viceroy. It shows the Neapolitans that the King has no great mind to return to the capital."

"I certainly feel His Majesty's reluctance to do his duty after all our hard fag in getting back his throne. But never mind! I know nothing

of Prince Caparo as a man—whatever he is he must be better than Cardinal Ruffo. Do you think there is truth in the rumour that the Cardinal has gone to Venice to try to be made Pope? ”

“The Queen thinks so! For my part I wish Cardinal York might be chosen. He has lost all his fortune, and, as a Royal Stuart, Britain could look to him to act honourable.”

“If he has lost his fortune I’m fairly sure he has lost his chance too. Fame says Ruffo has laid in a good stock of wealth; as the other Cardinals have nothing to give but promises, I think he stands a fair prospect. They are squabbling already, and some are making protests at holding the Conclave at Venice.”

“The Queen has told me a lot privately on that matter,” said Emma in a low voice. “But as all I have is yours, and the information concerns our beloved country, I feel ’tis my duty to repeat it. . . . Do you think it wrong, my dear love, to break a confidence? ”

“Never—in the interest of England.”

“Well, ’tis this way. The Queen was crying when I visited her two days ago, and on my inquiring the reason, she confessed she had received disquieting intelligence from her daughter, the Empress, which she could divulge to *no one*. Thereupon she told me that the Emperor of Germany had ambitious views on Italy, and had himself instructed Cardinal Herzan before he left for the Conclave to use his influence with the other Cardinals to elect Cardinal Mattei. The new Pope will not be suffered to quit Venice until he agrees to lay aside all thoughts of possessing troops, sea-ports and fortifications. He must place his reliance on Austria, not upon the Court of Naples, which, besides being too weak to protest, is under the influence of Great Britain, who has no object in view *but her own interest!* ” Emma eagerly wagged her finger. “There! That’s word for word what the Empress told her mother! ”

“So that is the way the wind blows! It explains much, and now I am warned I shall not be at a loss how to act. What you do for me! You are the dearest, the best friend of Nelson—a nonpareil.” Catching Emma’s hand, he pressed greedy kisses upon it. Laughing, she snatched it away, administering a playful slap as she did so.

“Have done do! How can I bathe your eye when you behave so foolish? ”

“I’m nearly blind—can you deny me a little pleasure? I declare that *loving* does more good than all the leeches and bathing prescribed by physicians.”

"But 'twill not do so much good as electricity!"

"I'll admit something I'd confess to no one but the wife of my bosom, for that you truly are. I, who fear not the heat of battle nor the bluster of tempests, tremble not a little at the thought of being a channel for a strange and terrible element."

"Sir Will'um declares 'tis quite safe if properly used. Indeed, when I worked for Dr. Graham I often saw blue lightning flash from his machine. I was only a young gal—science must have made strides since then."

"I hope you will not leave me while the treatment is on?"

She gave him a hearty kiss and a comforting squeeze. "Emma will never desert you!"

After a short course of electricity Nelson announced that his blind eye could discern the difference between light and darkness. The belief raised his spirits and his faith in the future.

"I think we can count on being together in England a few months hence. Really I cannot continue this hard fag much longer, and I shall ask permission to strike my flag the moment I can take or sink the French ships that escaped me at the Nile."

"Home I go in the Spring," said Sir William in determined tones. "The efforts this Court is making to keep me on will not prevail—I hope, at latest, to be in London for the King's birthday. If we can go by sea in your company, Nelson, I should much prefer it. Failing that I mean to go to Naples and post it through the Tyrol."

"'Twill not be good-bye to Italy, will it, Sir Will'um?" Anxiety sounded in Emma's voice.

"I shan't resign my office—I go home to settle my affairs, which God knows are in much confusion, and to get a little relaxation. I do not give up Palazzo Sessa, but at sixty-nine years old it is nonsense to take any decided resolution about returning."

"The Queen says they cannot get on without us, and we must promise to come back. If we won't, she vows to make us prisoners!"

"It is certainly very flattering that after thirty-five years' residence in Naples all should appear so very anxious for me to remain with them. Really I might do worse than bask out the remainder of my days in Naples' sun. We will look out for an active secretary in England to replace poor Smith, for I cannot labour without assistance as I have done lately."

"Sir Will'um, I've always done the donkey work," Emma protested.

He replied dryly: "Latterly I think ye toiled harder for Lord Nelson than for me."

The last months of the year brought unexpected gifts and honours for the hero of the Nile: a new decoration from the Grand Signior, to be known as the Order of the Crescent; a gold-hilted sword and cane enriched with diamonds from the Island of Zante; a description of a monument to be erected in Rome; a drawing of the Battle of the Nile and a portrait of the victor from the Grand Signior.

"The passion that the Grand Signior has taken for you is something quite extraordinary," Sir William remarked. "Everyone coming from Constantinople tells me that His Imperial Majesty expresses a strong desire to see you in his capital and daily names you with signs of the utmost veneration."

"It is certainly very gratifying to be the first Knight of the Crescent, and the pictures are curious but highly flattering to me. A handful of diamonds comes naturally from the hand of a great monarch, but these drawings, made probably for the occasion, could only come from an amiable, affectionate disposition and they show I am not in the least forgotten."

On Christmas Eve presents were exchanged with the royal family beneath decorated branches of a fir tree a-glitter with tinsel and candles in the German style. Afterwards the English party accompanied Their Majesties to all-night Mass at the cathedral.

Sir William retired exhausted to bed after the vigil, but Emma, declaring herself poisoned by incense fumes, insisted on taking an airing. She and Nelson strolled slowly along the pleached alleys skirting the Marina. A misty sunrise blended sea and sky into a soft flood of pink, blue and lilac, on which boats lay poised with slack sails. Pausing at a gazebo cut in the thick foliage, Emma looked out. Her hand with the wedding ring upon it fluttered among the leaves, crushing them until green juice trickled between her fingers.

"This time Sir Will'um means to take his leave, and nothing I can say will stop him. How shall I endure to go to England and leave you here—perhaps never to see you more? My adored being, my soul, my more than life, how shall I exist? I shall not! I will kill myself! I *will not* live without you!" Tears spangled her long lashes as she bent her lovely eyes upon Nelson.

He trembled and drew close. "It shan't happen, nothing shall separate us but duty to my country. And that, thank God, I consider all but done. There can be no reason to keep me here; I may say truly

that my shattered frame requires rest and the bracing air of my native land. Have no fear, we'll go home together, *tria juncta in uno*."

"And when we get to England? . . ."

He looked at her blankly. "It will be Spring-time, gorse will be aflame on the white cliffs."

"And Lady Nelson agog for your ship to anchor!"

Eagerness faded from his face. "How could she know the time or place? The meeting must be at some later date. You will like Fanny, I am sure—she is everything I could wish."

"Is she?" Indifference sounded in Emma's voice. Slowly she dropped the crumpled leaves and gazed at them lying tattered and limp on the ground. Suddenly, angrily, she stamped on them, wheeled lightly about and tripped away, crying gaily over her shoulder:

"Are you coming, Nelson?"

"Aye, I'm coming!"

Laughing she hastened her steps, luring him with beguiling glances to follow. From the town came the clangour of church bells and sharp explosions of fire-works—salutation to the Holy Child.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

EMMA greeted the new century with a supper and card-party. At midnight a 9-pounder borrowed from the *Atty* transport thundered an 18-gun salute from the garden as Sir William, masquerading as Time, ran out into the moonlight chased by a naked baby boy representing 1800. Play continued into the morning, and sunshine glittered on the bay when the last guests tottered down the terrace stairs to carriages waiting on the Marina. Returning to the card-room, Emma, Sir William, Nelson and Cornelia Knight dropped languidly into chairs standing aslant around the faro table.

Emma yawned, blew out a candle, and yawned again. "Lud! How tired I am—I believe I could sleep for a week. Last night I lost two hundred ducats to General Acton. If he'd had any manners he'd have given them back this morning—he could well afford to, but I saw the money drop into Mary Anne's white satin bag as they crossed the terrace."

"One cannot help feeling distress for that poor child," murmured Miss Knight. "After Lady Acton's death the parents should have taken her away. Of course one wishes to be charitable, but really the girl's behaviour scarcely appears innocent."

Emma laughed. "I believe the old man intends to marry her! "

Sir William crossed his richly garbed legs and petulantly swung his quizzing glass from a bony knuckle. "What cause for ridicule do you find in an honourable act? Perhaps the General appears too aged? "

"And the moral scruples too great to be overcome! " Nelson hotly broke in. "I cannot believe that even this country gives its countenance to incest. Also, what of the Papal verdict? "

"A dispensation would depend on the price offered," Emma said maliciously. "Sir John is rich and will be charged accordingly, on the other hand the next Pope may come to terms, his coffers being empty. . . ."

"Mary Anne has been brought up a Protestant," Sir William reminded.

The new century was marked by no change in Neapolitan policy. Writing from Malta on New Year's Day Sir Thomas Troubridge described the situation:

"My Lord, We are dying off fast for want. I learn by letters from Messina, that Sir William Hamilton says Prince Luzzi refused corn some time ago, and Sir W. does not think it worth while making another application. If that be the case, I wish he commanded at this distressing scene instead of me. Puglia has an immense harvest, nearly thirty sail left Messina before I did, to load corn;—will they let us have any? If not, a short time will decide the business. The German interests prevail, I wish I was at your lordship's elbow for an hour, *all, all* will be thrown on you, rely on it. I will parry the blow as much as is in my power; I foresee much mischief brewing. God bless your lordship—I am miserable, I cannot assist your operations more. Many happy returns of this day to you—I never spent so miserable a one. I am not very tender hearted; but really the distress here would even move a Neapolitan."

Again Sir William and Nelson applied themselves to the familiar task of begging for the Maltese. "Sooner than they should want I would sell Bronte and the Emperor of Russia's box," declared the hero.

"That would be nonsense," Sir William retorted; "money will be available, as Italinski agrees with me that England and Russia must assist Naples to keep the loyal Maltese from starving."

"Money avails little if food cannot be procured; there are vessels with corn now lying at Girgenti, but the seamen will not go to sea in winter. I pray and beg, alas! in vain."

"It is an extraordinary situation and most irksome," Sir William acknowledged.

"The moment Troubridge can spare the *Foudroyant*, I shall go to Malta and judge what measures shall be taken. I am the more anxious because, if rumour speaks truth, Lord Keith is at Gibraltar and he may have different views."

"Can it be possible that he comes back as Commander-in-Chief?" Emma's voice rang with indignation. "I can't believe there exists one base enough to take your command."

Sir William nodded approval. "Well said, Emma! Ye fairly translate the language of friendship, but reveal less knowledge of the Admiralty Board, which is a soulless institution."

Nelson sighed. "The information is not official, but I make no doubt that I shall soon be lowered in the eyes of all."

Efforts failed to rouse King Ferdinando to his responsibilities. He was indifferent to the sufferings of the Maltese, he declined to re-occupy his throne at Naples, but he did express lively interest in the activities of his Austrian allies.

"His Majesty comes to me with every report that is detrimental," Queen Carolina whimpered to Emma. "I am not responsible for the Emperor's ambitions, and I should suffer most, as the King would be content if his dominion consisted only of this island. That we may be reduced to; Moreau is at Vienna *treating for peace!* The surrender of Coni last month has resulted in the total expulsion of the French from Piedmont, but the enemy still occupy Genoa and the whole Riviera. Each side has something to bargain with, and the Emperor's terms are that he keeps Italy for himself! We are betrayed, and so are the Russians—Marshal Suvárov, with his whole army, marches away to Poland!"

"My God!" Emma cried in consternation. "What treachery! The Austrian victories that we all shouted up are naught but a stab in the back. What will the Emperor Paul do?"

"I am hopeful that he does not intend to forsake us, because the Russian squadron with troops on board has arrived at Messina."

Emma hastened back to Palazzo Palagonia to impart the intelligence, but found herself forestalled. Climbing the stairs she heard Nelson's nasal tones.

"What a state the Allies bring us to! At Vienna I know they will be happy to make peace with Buonaparte, who will, if he gains his point, be declared Protector of the Liberty of the French Republic. If this happens, England can do nothing but make peace. It is vain to cry out—John Bull was always ill-treated!"

"The attitude of Russia is puzzling," Sir William murmured.

"I hear that Suvárov is at Prague, with his whole army—ready to act with the Austrians if they come to their senses, or perhaps against them."

In the next few days vessels and couriers reached Palermo with dispatches that clarified the situation in the gloomiest manner. Ad-

miralty orders directed Lord Nelson to put himself under Lord Keith's command.

"I have now a Commander-in-Chief, and have only to obey," Nelson announced wryly. "Lord Keith shall find me an officer ever ready to anticipate his wishes, *so long as my health will permit.*"

Emma muttered: "Such a slight makes my blood boil."

"Without question there is a design to lower all those who gained *honour* at the Nile. Among letters from England is one directed by Lord Spencer to *Captain* Troubridge, I hope the *inside* will be more pleasing to the Baronet than the *outside* is to me!"

"I am disgusted, and really feel no longer anxious to serve our country," said Emma in haughty tones.

The Court also received dispatches occasioning the utmost consternation. Even the King was sufficiently roused to call at Palazzo Palagonia.

"All my little Russians are to retire into the Black Sea," he shouted, flapping a heavily sealed document in front of Lord Nelson's face. "That madman, the Emperor Paul, makes nothing of his solemn treaty to support us; we are abandoned because he is breaking off his alliance with the Court of Vienna. Why should I be punished for Austrian treachery? Those Hapsburgs! Foxes! Vultures! Scheming reptiles! There, that's what I think of the Emperor of Germany!" Ferdinando spat with noisy malice upon the floor of Sir William's cabinet. "How can we get on without the Russians? The number of soldiers the Tzar commands is inexhaustible—they can march for ever!"

"Aye, phantom armies without substance who conquer through fear! I based my hopes on General Vaubois' sharing the prevalent belief in Russian might to the extent of capitulating at sight of Admiral Ouschakoff's squadron."

"I shan't allow Paul to annul his treaty without protest," Ferdinando declared. "Sir John shall write some firm letters. Talking of firmness, I've got papers in my pocket that call for strong words from me. Two vessels loaded with corn have been seized at Girgenti by a British warship and carried off to Malta. This is an affront to my dignity!"

"No disrespect was intended to Your Majesty—it was a case of most imperious necessity. Either the Island of Malta must have been given up to the French or your orders be anticipated." Nelson's manner became severe. "Sire, I trust Your Majesty's Government will

never again force any of His Britannic Majesty's servants to so unpleasant an alternative."

Ferdinando's face darkened. "Is there to be no apology?"

"I will put in writing that I disclaim any disrespect to Your Majesty."

Ferdinando pointed loweringly at Sir William. "General Acton shall present an official protest to you as British Minister."

"It shall be transmitted to those concerned," Sir William suavely rejoined. "Come, Sire, don't allow this small difficulty to cloud our happy relations. Wine will mellow vexation—or would ye prefer porter? A cask has just reached me from England."

Ferdinando's eyes glistened. "Porter," he said in a tone of renewed affability.

Emma served the drink with a tavern-maid's flourish, she hobbled glasses with His Majesty and finally accompanied the placated monarch to the garden gate.

Laughing, she returned between Nelson and Sir William up the terrace steps. "Was it the frigate *Strombolo* that Troubridge sent to seize the corn?"

Nelson answered: "Yes; but Captain Broughton first offered money."

"Even if it entailed boarding the vessels, Troubridge would not hesitate to give the order. Indeed, I admire Troubridge for his daring, though I wince when he writes cruelly to me, as he has done, about my love of cards. Everyone here enjoys high play, and I am not singular, but as he sees harm in it I'll write promising to give up, for I have no wish to offend anyone."

It was Sir William's turn to laugh. "And how long will you keep your promise?"

Turning, she gave him a playful slap. "Just so long as I can, Sir Will'um!"

On the 14th of January the *Foudroyant* returned from Malta and Nelson shifted his flag from the *Atty* transport, which had served as his flagship since the end of November. For two days the narrow streets of Palermo reverberated to rumbling wheels of loaded wagons carrying water and stores to the jetty.

"How long are you meaning to keep the seas?" Emma asked in dismay. "Such supplies should last for a voyage to America and back."

"I prepare for any event, having no wish to incur censure from the great Lord Keith. Had I my own way I should proceed direct to Malta, but being no longer my own master, I must go to Leghorn against my judgment."

"'Twill be cruel indeed if the island should fall and Lord Keith reap the glory."

"The great Lord believes the Ferrol squadron and the combined fleet destined for the Mediterranean, thus he may take our ships from the blockade. So be it!"

On this occasion one of the royal family assembled on the mole to bid Godspeed to the English Admiral. The King had gone to one of his hunting lodges with a Prima Donna from the Opera; Queen Carolina sulked in a nun's cell at the Carmelite convent; the Princesses were at the palace comforting their sister-in-law, who again found herself with child.

"'Tis unfortunate that Their Majesties do not draw the same way," said Sir William as he and Emma strolled home along the Marina. "At this moment when the most energetic government is wanted there is nothing but general corruption. At Naples the intrigues and opposition of the Barons continues to create universal discontent profitable only to the Courts of Vienna and Madrid."

"The Queen accuses General Acton of encouraging the King to inactivity."

"Her Majesty blames him for every evil, and he retaliates by suggesting to the King that the Queen's passions lead her into indiscretions with scheming persons who deceive and betray her. Prince Belmonte and Prince Castelcicala are particularly cited."

"Ferdinando is in no position to preach!"

"In justice I think his amours are entirely lascivious! I wish both monarchs would arrive at an agreement to return to their capital and save me the cost of maintaining two establishments. When I get my leave, Em, we will give up this house, unless Nelson wishes to live in it. Our faithful servants we will send to Palazzo Scssa to keep it aired against our return."

Emma nodded: "By that time the Court must be back at Naples."

Palermo without Nelson afforded few distractions. Emma sought diversion at cards, at the opera and on sketching expeditions with Cornelia Knight. The superior achievements of her friend soon put Emma out of conceit with her own performance.

She examined a picture of the ditch outside the city wall. "You

manage to paint the prickly-pear so very natural, mine look like tamarines."

"In childhood I had the advantage of sound instruction," Cornelia explained.

Suspecting patronage, Emma frowned. "If it comes to that, I had the privilege of sitting to Mr. Romney, whom all acknowledge to be the best artist in this or any age."

"Do they?" Cornelia replied with gentle indulgence.

To Sir William, Emma expressed dudgeon. "By speaking so very sweet, Cornelia does not make me feel comfortable."

As usual, Sir William and Emma dealt with Nelson's correspondence, and thus learnt of negotiations between the Grand Vizier and Captain Sir Sidney Smith for the evacuation of the French from Egypt.

"This war has shown us strange events," Sir William said, "but nothing more astonishing than the Swedish Knight, in the rôle of Minister Plenipotentiary, preparing to give passports to sixty thousand armed troops whose avowed intention is to fight us on regaining their native land."

"He must be mad!"

"In Sir Sidney's opinion the recovery of Egypt outweighs any threat to Europe. I don't know what view Lord Keith will take, but I can shrewdly guess at Nelson's."

"The Great Jove has said many times that he would never permit a single Frenchman to quit Egypt during the war."

"And quite right!"

After an absence of eighteen days the *Foudroyant* was sighted early in the morning of the 3rd of February. Half an hour later the *Queen Charlotte* appeared on the horizon with all sails set.

"Though she is the finest three-decker in the Navy, she can't overhaul the *Foudroyant*!" Emma proclaimed with satisfaction.

"We won't honour Lord Keith by meeting him at the mole," Sir William decided. "Nelson will understand why we break our custom."

At noon the ships anchored in the roadstead. Emma and Sir William took turns at the telescope, but a long half-hour elapsed before they descried a boat putting off for the shore.

"'Tis Tom Allen—I hope naught ails Nelson!"

Sir William replied impatiently: "Ye always anticipate the worst; doubtless Tom brings a letter requesting dinner to be delayed."

His guess was nearly correct. Nelson addressed Emma in his shaky scrawl:

"Having a Commander-in-Chief, I cannot come on shore till I have made *my manners* to him. Times are changed; but if he does not come on shore directly, I will not wait. In the meantime, I send Allen to inquire how you are. Send me word, for I am anxious to hear of you. It has been no fault of mine that I have been so long absent. I cannot command and now only obey."

Sir William read the hasty lines and said: "Write a civil note to Lord Keith and his Lady, inviting them to join us at table—if not this day, then to-morrow. We must keep on the right side of this great man, if only for Nelson's sake!"

To the hero's annoyance, his Commander-in-Chief followed closely on his heels. Lord Keith brought with him his Flag-Lieutenant and showed every disposition to remain until nightfall in the congenial company of a brother Scot.

"Damn him!" Nelson muttered. "Does the great Lord think to rob me of happiness *and* laurels?"

Emma sang, performed attitudes and danced the Tarantella with Sir William as partner. Congratulations and applause made the evening much more agreeable than she anticipated. Lord Keith took a reluctant departure at midnight after exacting a promise from his hostess to visit Lady Keith in the morning.

"Her Ladyship must give us the pleasure of her company while your ship is in port," Emma declared with enthusiasm born of flattery. "We have spare rooms a-plenty and love nothing better than company!" Only when she caught sight of Nelson's thunderous face did she realize the magnitude of her blunder.

"Never did I think to see you, my dearest friend, showing yourself off to the man who would rob me and my brave followers of honour and glory! My senses are almost gone to-night; I feel as I have never felt before." Clutching his brows, Nelson walked frantically up and down, stopped, and flung himself on the bed muttering: "My head! My head! But I will lie still and try to compose my spirits, miserable wretch that I am!"

"I won't be reproached!" cried Emma, stamping her foot. "I only acted civil because Sir Will'um said we must keep on the right side of Lord Keith for your sake!"

"Damme! I don't want any diplomacy. I seek no favour from the great Lord; by my upright conduct I am content to stand or fall. Do not, I beseech you, beguile him."

"Beguile Lord Keith? What do you mean? I tried to entertain him as I have hundreds of sea officers. Do you suppose you are the only Admiral we've had at our house? Good God! You are even better pleased with yourself than I thought. But you can keep your ideas, for I have no patience to listen nor wish to be insulted. What's more, I don't care if I never set eyes on you again!" With this final shot Emma slipped through the door and shut it behind her. The marble corridor immediately chilled her temper and arrested her footsteps. Miserably she stood at the top of the stairs gazing back into the shaft of darkness that hid Nelson's door. Oh, God, what had she done? . . .

Like a gun-shot came the sharp click of a key turned in a lock. Shivering, she moved on; her bare feet made no sound on the marble pavement.

She had a wretched night, and twice rose from her tumbled bed to patter to her lover's room; each time pride intervened. As sunlight, flowing between the slatted jalousies, built golden ladders up the walls, she fell into troubled sleep from which Sir William roused her.

"Tis past ten o'clock, and I ordered a boat at the half-hour, to take us to the *Queen Charlotte*. 'Twill be a courteous and politic act to bring Lady Keith to the ease of a stable bed; I can't believe that any woman prefers hard lying, however devoted she may be to duty."

"Won't Nelson lend us his barge?"

"He returned to the *Foudroyant* at cock-crow, and left no message. I fear Lord Keith's pleasure last night had a contrary effect on our friend, but if all cannot be satisfied at the same time I shall not allow myself to be provoked."

Sir William's admirable philosophy smoothed the way through a difficult day. Lady Keith needed no persuasion to take up her abode at Palazzo Palagonia while the *Queen Charlotte* was in port. The Commander-in-Chief and his Flag-Lieutenant accompanied her; two maids, three men-servants, a secretary, a lap-dog and a dozen boxes formed an entourage that followed in a long boat. To reach the shore the gay flotilla passed beneath the stern gallery of the *Foudroyant*, where a small forlorn figure stood nonchalantly saluting his commanding officer.

The afternoon was spent at the Colli with the King and his chil-

dren; the Hereditary Princess, looking pinched and tearful, deputed for the Queen, detained by pious exercises at the Carmelite convent. Emma exerted herself, but failed to be more than a pale reflection of her customary self. She conversed, sang and danced, but with little spirit, and she overheard a couple of officers from the flagship expressing surprise that the notorious Ambassadors should prove such a tame Delilah. Blushing, she bit her lip, but thereafter comported herself with gay bravado. The hastily arranged *fête-champêtre* terminated at sundown; but the merry-making did not end. Sitting beside Lord Keith, Emma headed a long procession of strange vehicles conveying sea officers from the flagships to a supper and ball at Palazzo Palagonia. Though she smiled, she wished them all at the devil, especially the wooden-visaged Admiral retailing Scottish anecdotes in a harsh, resonant voice.

Seizing an opportunity, she asked: "Are you visiting Malta when you sail hence? Or do you stay to guard us from the enemy?"

"I shall take an early opportunity to end the blockade; it has dragged on too long and holds up ships and men required for other operations. I have just told His Sicilian Majesty that if he wants to add the island to his domains he must send soldiers to take it, Great Britain having already supplied a greater land force than she can spare. I did not add, as I should have liked, that he had no more claim to Malta than the man in the moon."

"If Nelson, Troubridge and Ball cannot have the pleasure of capturing the island, their hearts will be broke; they and Captain Gould are the last of those who fought at the Nile, all the rest now serve on other stations."

"The 'Band of Brothers', eh? To me, one officer is as good as another, provided he does his duty. I can't feel roused up by Nelson's sentimentality, and were he not at the same time endowed with a strange genius for battle, I fear I should not have patience to humour him."

Emma bit her lip, keeping back an angry rush of words. On reaching home her first inquiries were for Nelson, but nothing had been seen of him. His place was laid at Emma's left hand, but Sir Edward Berry occupied it.

"Was aught the matter with the Great Jove when you left the ship?" Her voice sounded agitated to her own ears.

"He complained of a pain in his heart."

Champagne, tokay and maraschino were served. Emma drank them all and attained spurious gaiety. During dessert she sprang to her feet and raised a brimming beaker high above her head. "Fill your glasses, fill your glasses," she cried. "The toast is 'Lord Nelson, the greatest man on earth'. Hip, hip, huzzar!" Tilting back her head, she drained the beaker, flicked the last drop on her thumb nail and dashed the glass into the centre of the table. Officers from the *Foudroyant* boisterously followed her example, but guests from the *Queen Charlotte* sipped wryly and preserved their glasses. Lord Keith drank the toast with aplomb, and discarded his glass by a dextrous twist that broke off the stem. Afterwards the evening followed the pattern of hundreds that had preceded it; Emma danced, gambled, won and lost. But it ended differently. For the first time she stumbled tipsily to bed.

The aftermath of dissipation threw the onus of entertaining his distinguished guests upon Sir William. "Had we been in Naples I could have acted as your cicerone to the most remarkable natural phenomena in the world," he informed Lord Keith. "Unfortunately Palermo has been shabbily used in this respect, but of curiosities devised by man there is abundance. This morning I propose to edify you with a visit to the dead of this city, who, baked in lime, are preserved and stored by the Cappuccini. In the afternoon we will drive to the country seat of my mad landlord, il Principe di Palagonia, who has squandered his fortune on a herd of six hundred stone monsters which exhibit the heads of men on the bodies of every sort of animal or a compound of five or six animals and reptiles which have no sort of resemblance in nature."

Before setting out on these expeditions Sir William visited Emma, who lay with an ice-bag on her head.

"At the cost of much discomfort to myself I have engaged our guests attention for the day." He paused, waiting for Emma's reply, but she only opened her eyes and blinked dully. "Deuce take it, Emma! Are ye indifferent to the consequences if it reaches Lord Grenville's ears that Lady Hamilton was so drunk that she had to keep her bed?"

"Wine has never gone to my head before."

"You've never been tipsy, as ye were last night, but often lately I've seen ye rather 'up in the world', as the vulgar say. I warn you now, it must stop! I won't have the end of my career made ridiculous by an intemperate wife."

Turning on her side, Emma presented him with a sulky shoulder. "Very well, Sir Will'um," she muttered.

She waited to hear the door close before resuming her former position. Her head throbbed less when she lay on her back, and her thoughts were clearer. Sir William and his strictures faded from her mind. Why didn't Nelson come? . . . Was punishment to be everlasting for harsh words spoken in anger? . . . If he was so cruel, 'twas better he should go. . . . Emma Hamilton wasn't the one to ask favours or to make apologies. . . . There were other things than love to fill a woman's heart. . . .

But that wasn't true! . . . There was no use pretending. . . . If Nelson forsook Emma, life was done indeed. . . .

The arched window framed the *Foudroyant* lying at anchor on a smooth blue sea. Her black-and-yellow hull and tapering spars looked fragile as a paper silhouette. Emma, leaning on her elbow, watched the courier boat, flying Ferdinando's colours, draw away from the stern ladder and pull for the shore. . . . That meant dispatches from England had come in the Marchese Circello's diplomatic bag. More troubles in store. . . . What cruel things was London saying of poor Emma? . . . But let everyone repeat what lies they pleased. . . . With a clear conscience one could be above petty spite. . . . Did Fanny Nelson's black brows still meet in a bar across her nose? . . . 'Twas said to be a sign of temper. . . . For once rumour spoke truth. . . . Never was there such a vixen. . . . What comfort came from that? . . . Fanny was Lady Nelson. . . . Emma had no rights and a heart that was broke. . . .

By the time Sir William returned Emma's blazing cheeks recorded a vigil of anxious expectation and gradual despair.

"Did Nelson come ashore?" he asked, tearing the seals from a packet in his hand.

"No," she replied in a low, spent voice.

"I suppose he remains on board to avoid Lord Keith's society. I'm not surprised; the great Lord is a dull fellow, as I can testify after several hours in his company."

Emma's face brightened and her voice was eager. "Do you really think that's why Nelson keeps away?"

Sir William made no answer, his eyes read down the foolscap sheet. Presently he looked up and meditatively tapped a tune on the paper.

"Em, we've got our marching orders!"

"What do you mean?"

"The Honourable Arthur Paget is named Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the King of the Two Sicilies and my reccredential letter is on the way."

"My God!" For a moment Emma was too stunned to say more; slightly recovering, she asked: "Who is he? 'Tis not a name we know in the Diplomatic Corps."

"Oh yes! Paget, though only twenty-nine, has nearly ten years' service behind him, which includes some important posts. He is the third son of the Earl of Uxbridge and a shining light in the Conway-Fetherstonhaugh-Payne set which gravitates round the Prince of Wales."

"What fools we've been!" Emma bitterly declared as she envisaged the bleak prospect. "'Tis your fault, Sir Will'um, for pestering Lord Grenville to let you go home to see after your estate. Never can I forget the rain and cold of Wales, and I tell you fair I won't settle in Pembroke! The company of cows and pigs will not be enough society for me."

"Beggars cannot be choosers—this sudden appointment of a new Minister will plunge me into untold difficulties. Somehow I shall have to liquidate my debts, here and in Naples, in order to quit my post with the same honour as I have maintained it in the course of thirty-six years. Your selfish concern for your own pleasure does not help me, Emma."

"I said before, and I must say again, *you have brought it on yourself, Sir Will'um!*"

"If it affords you satisfaction I'll admit that two years ago in a fit of pique I did authorise Lord Grenville to dispose of my place if he could not see his way to granting me leave!"

"Now he's taken you at your word I hope you like it!"

"I shall be more resigned if His Lordship carries out my stipulation of an annuity for life of a clear two thousand pounds sterling—not a nominal pension. I said I'd rather continue all my life at Naples than retire for less."

"You'll be fortunatel!"

"There's one satisfaction—I have now not a doubt we shall benefit by returning home with Nelson. *Entre nous*, I learnt to-day that Lord Keith is to be in sole command in the Mediterranean, Earl St. Vincent being already named successor to Lord Bridport as Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet. I fancy the Duke of Thunder will not meekly submit to degradation in this theatre."

"No indeed!" Emma's face brightened as a plan formulated. "Shall I write to Nelson and tell him what has befallen? Knowledge of our misfortune will bring him, Lord Keith or no Lord Keith!"

"Yes, do, my dear; ye might add that I should appreciate his advice."

Emma lost no time. The letter she sent was a passionate composition covering four sheets in a vein so flattering that it brought the hero post-haste to Palazzo Palagonia. Sir William being present, the lovers could only exchange swift looks of contrition and forgiveness.

"Ill news has brought me swiftly to your side," said Nelson, clasping Sir William warmly by the hand. "You and I, my dear friend, are in the same boat, both about to be flung overboard to make room for cleverer men—but never mind!"

Sir William laughed ruefully. "I have been either kicked up or down out of my post! Mr. Arthur Paget succeeds me and is on his way hither. I had not the least hint of such an intention from England, public or private, but the Marchese Circello says in a letter to Acton that my retreat is at my own desire!"

"It is all of a piece, and one can only submit! Speaking for myself, I have serious thoughts of giving up active service—Greenwich Hospital seems a fit retreat for me after being evidently thought unfit to command in the Mediterranean."

Sir William was still engrossed in his own grievances. "I'm a sufficiently old hand to recognize this as a Cabinet job; they wish to provide for Paget, and can do so in no other way. The prospect of a new Minister gives much uneasiness at this Court."

Emma took a crumpled paper from her bosom and smoothed it between her hands. "Listen to this from my dear sorrowing Queen:

'Your letters penetrate my heart and afflict me extremely. I am almost dead with grief. I am constantly thinking that if the Chevalier were to renounce the idea of going to England, so as not to quit us in this difficult moment, and that instead, the King were to write, this storm might pass over. I should very much wish that in the course of to-morrow your health would allow of your coming to me without inconvenience, with the Chevalier, or without him, as you think best, to consider what is best to be done. Adieu, my dear Lady, my tender friend, my beloved Emma, and believe me, till death, your attached and sincere friend *Charlotte*.'

"A most gratifying letter," Nelson agreed.

"Expressive of Her Majesty's impulsive nature," Sir William supplemented. "The King and Acton also voice regret, but in more modified language. Be that as it may, let me get home and settle my affairs, then Emma and the Queen may dispose of my old carcase as they please!"

Lord Keith was on board the *Queen Charlotte*. His Lady, accompanied by Cornelia Knight, spent the day with Princess Caparo at her villa at La Bagaria.

"Tis like old times," said Emma as she sat down to dinner. "*Tria juncta in uno*—but how long can we stay united?"

Nelson answered: "I have told my Commander-in-Chief that I have made a vow to strike my flag if I take by myself the Ships of the Line that escaped me from the Nile fleet."

Emma's heart sank. "Then farewell to all hope of sailing with you to England. *Le Guillaume Tell* hides in Valletta harbour and may well become your prize—but *Le Gênercux*! God alone knows where she is!"

"I could wish ye had been less explicit in your vow," said Sir William, drawing a long face.

Nelson gravely responded: "I trust to my star, which has never failed me yet."

Before sailing for Malta, Lord Keith gave a grand dinner on board the *Queen Charlotte*, to which he invited the King and Queen, their family, the foreign Envoys, Secretaries of State and the principal officers of the Court. Lord Keith faced his social duty with annoyance that was increased by a strong *tramontana* which dashed great waves against the sea wall, drenching with white foam the orange and lemon trees growing along the Marina. For the convenience of the royal guests and at the cost of much exertion the flagship was hauled in to the mole, meanwhile the *Foudroyant* meeting the full force of the wind, dragged her anchor and drifted towards the shore. Watching from Palazzo Palagonia, Nelson saw a signal hoisted by the Commander-in-Chief and read it wrathfully.

"Poor Sir Ed'ard is getting another reprimand, yet to drag anchor in a gale might happen to anyone, and this roadstead is unprotected. Apparently the Peer does not think my Captain a good seaman; that being so, I'll return on board and see to matters myself—if you'll kindly ask Lord Keith to excuse me from attending his dinner."

For the first time since becoming Sir William's wife, Emma occupied an unimportant seat at table. She was placed among young Court ladies and junior officers, a humiliation too studied to pass unnoticed. Her cheeks flamed, but she accepted the slight graciously, and presently took revenge by reducing her neighbours to helpless laughter by masterly imitations of the Commander-in-Chief and his Lady.

"Not that it is good manners to quiz one's hosts," Emma confided to the surgeon. "But mind this: nobody can get the better of Emma Hamilton! I'm civil and obliging to everybody, but I spare none that treat me ill."

Her behaviour embarrassed Sir William, who drew her aside as the royal party prepared to tour the ship. "I had no idea ye could act like a hoyden. Your uproarious mirth drowned all conversation and drew every eye in your direction."

"What of it? I'm used to being stared at, and 'tis the first time I've known you to object."

"You are well aware that I've never countenanced a vulgar exhibition; this day your true origin has shown itself, to my profound confusion."

"Have you nothing to say of the way I was treated? Lady Hamilton to be put to sit with dogs' bodies."

"What?"

"That's what Nelson calls Midshipmen and other small fry, yet Lord Keith considered them good enough company for Lady Hamilton!"

"Because you were the victim of bad manners provides a greater reason to set a good example."

"So I did, Sir Will'um. I showed Lady Keith how to entertain, a trick she's never learnt!"

That night Emma's description of the affront she had suffered increased Nelson's ire.

"Nothing surprises me from that quarter, but I shall not forget the slight offered to the best and loveliest woman in the world. Let him behave like a hog if he pleases; it only proves what a beast he is! But you and I are above petty spite and can afford to ignore it."

At sunrise on the 12th of February the *Queen Charlotte* and the *Foudroyant* embarked eight hundred Sicilian infantrymen to reinforce the troops besieging La Vallette, and sailed later in the morning. Believing in Nelson's speedy return, Emma watched with less than her usual grief the white sails disappearing over the horizon.

February brought warm air, cloudless skies and flowers blooming in brilliant sunshine. Riding a big white Maltese ass, a gift from Captain Ball, Emma made solitary excursions into the country.

"'Tis not safe to go unprotected," Sir William cautioned. "Why this new mania? Is it that ye must always act perversely? After discouraging my wish to buy riding horses, so beneficial to my health, ye now choose to disport yourself on a fantastic creature only fit for a circus, and at a moment when I should be glad of your assistance."

"I can help and ride too; the poor beast can't work all day long. What do you want me to do, Sir Will'um?"

"To disentangle our affairs—if you can! I find everything in utter confusion, the only fact perfectly patent is that our debts exceed assets by several hundreds of pounds. I shall have no choice but to give bills on Messrs Ross, payable at different periods."

"Do you know how much money you have to meet them?"

"I really know not my circumstances, except that I have lived beyond my means in keeping an inn for thirty-six years. Latterly a comely landlady called more company than I wanted, as guests did not, as in other public-houses, fatten the landlord!"

"Sir Will'um! I'm surprised! You always expressed pleasure at being the most popular Minister in the King's service."

"And so I was and am! I glory especially in the hospitality I have been able to show to Nelson and almost all the heroes of the Nile—it will be the pride of the rest of my days to be intimately acquainted with such a valuable set of men. But if Government does not think to reimburse me, I will do myself the justice of laying my whole circumstances before the King, who never forgets the many years we passed together."

"Then we needn't worry, Sir Will'um. Give bills on your agents; all creditors will count them just as good as money."

For several days no news of importance came from Nelson, nor were there further tidings of Sir William's successor. Queen Carolina continued to lament.

"I never knew until now how greatly attached I am to the Cavaliere—my eyes swim with tears when I think how much I owe him. Indeed, I foresee we shall lose through this fatal Paget our good friends and finally the friendship and alliance with England."

"From all accounts, I fear you will not like the new Envoy," said Emma with a knowledgeable air. "He belongs to the Prince of Wales' circle, so you may guess what that means!"

"As I feared—a young man liable to misbehave himself. Wrong-headed counsellors will induce him to abuse his power; *that* will not be tolerated and troubles will arise!"

"What does the King say about Sir Will'um going?"

"Nothing to me—I am not in His Majesty's confidence! Sometimes I ask myself if he has effected this lamentable turn of affairs. He knows that you and the Chevalier are indispensable to me, which is sufficient reason for the King to desire a change."

"Surely he could not be so base!"

"I know nothing, but suspect much. Sir William's insistence that the King should return to Naples has caused much vexation. His Majesty may think that a younger Minister of less authority would not dare to give advice."

"Good God! Do you suppose the King and General Acton have been intriguing behind our backs?"

"I have written privately to Circello asking for information; my discoveries will be at your service, to act on for our common interest."

On returning from the palace Emma repeated the conversation to Sir William. "Do you suspect Ferdinando of working behind our backs?"

"Nothing would astonish me, and I know my importunity has caused no small annoyance to His Majesty, who has little desire to return to Naples, as he labours under the strongest apprehensions for his own safety."

"Do you think the General is in the plot?"

"I imagine not, as he supports my arguments and has just given evidence that he regards me as a friend. I don't know how ye will take his request for a Protestant marriage service at this house for his nuptials on Saturday the 22nd."

"With Mary Anne?"

"No less! In the evening the ceremony is to be gone through again in the palace chapel, according to the rites of Rome. His Majesty gives away the young lady on the second occasion, while I act a father's part at the first marriage. You look shocked!" Sir William laughed. "Mrs. Cadogan promises to make a cake. Will you be responsible for the bride's gown?"

"You make light of it, Sir Will'um, but Mary Anne isn't fourteen, and the General's niece into the bargain!"

"Acton follows the custom of his adopted country!"

"I shall never approve though I give Mary Anne a veil and bridal gown—yet I own 'twill be a pleasure to dress one so pretty."

On the wedding morning a *polacca* from Syracuse brought express letters from Nelson. Emma, improvising an altar out of a table and her best linen sheet, subsided upon the floor amid orange blossom, lace and white ribbons to read her *billet-doux*. She was alone in the great drawing-room, but through a vista of open doors Sir William could be seen working at his desk. Her cry of joy made him pull his spectacles to the end of his nose to survey Emma over the rims.

"This appears to be a lucky day: I also have something that will give ye satisfaction."

"Your news can't be so good as mine, but tell me!"

"It will not deteriorate by keeping, while yours, I see, is a combustible quality likely to cause damage unless given an outlet. Read on, Emma!"

Springing to her feet, she ran through the intervening rooms crying: "Nelson's got *Le Généreux*! He doesn't say precisely if she is captured or sunk, but I think she must be taken because he writes: 'I have not suffered the French Admiral to contaminate the *Foudroyant* by setting his foot in her.'"

"Good news indeed!"

"Twelve out of thirteen; only *Le Guillaume Tell* remains of the French fleet vanquished at the Nile. I hope Lord Keith had no part in this triumph—it must be Nelson's; all Nelson's!"

"What a partisan you are!" said Sir William, with a wistful look.

"I can't bear disappointments for those I lo . . ." She stopped and hastily altered the sentence: "for those I like. What good news have you got, Sir Will'um?"

He continued to eye her strangely. "I sometimes wonder if I am attracted or repelled by your adoration of success. Like nature, ye cannot endure failure and would ruthlessly leave weaklings to perish. How will ye fare when ye pass your own meridian?"

"God knows! But I've done naught to deserve a lecture, and if you've nothing good to tell me I'll go back to prepare for the wedding."

"But I have some excellent news: Your Ladyship is named by the Emperor of Russia *Dame Petite Croix de l'Ordre St. Jean de Jérusalem* and Captain Ball *Commandeur Honoraire*. Here is the decoration, all ready on a ribbon for you to wear." Taking the cross from a box, Sir

William laid it on the palm of her hand; it had eight points, and was made of white enamel edged with black.

"Am I the first woman to be honoured with the Order of Malta?"

"I imagine so—and probably it is the Emperor Paul's first investiture since becoming Grand Master. Be that as it may, Lord Whitworth, in his capacity as Minister at St. Petersburg, has wrote to England requesting His Majesty to be pleased to allow you to wear the cross."

"Twill be an eye-opener for St. James's to learn how I am thought of in foreign Empires, and there are some at this Court who will look very sour. I hope my dear Queen has the Order too, for she gave more than I could to buy food for the poor Maltese."

"Ye may rest assured that you and Captain Ball are the only recipients—the present hostility of the Emperor Paul to the Court of Vienna will not lead him to decorate a Grand Duchess of Austria."

Anticipating King George's permission, Emma wore her decoration at Mary Anne's second wedding in the royal chapel. While the old General and his childish bride knelt on cushions listening to the Archbishop's nuptial address, the Queen's roving glance came to rest on the tiny Maltese cross. Her face changed. Immediately after the ceremony she drew Emma behind a pillar and took the cross between her plump, pearl-white fingers.

"Very pretty, Miledi, and a gracious acknowledgment of your exertions. I am delighted, though the Emperor Paul does not consider my endeavours worthy of notice. Such neglect of forms and the slights shown by our allies cannot fail to make a painful impression, especially after the enormous expenses I have incurred. But I must cultivate resignation."

Emma's ready tongue came to her aid: "This little cross and a larger one for Captain Ball were sent as a courtesy to Lord Nelson; the Emperor would never think of employing such scant respect to a great Queen. Your Order of Malta will come ceremoniously through diplomatic channels!"

Carolina's face cleared. "You are right, Miledi, as usual, and your words come as a merited reproof. But I have suffered so many indignities that I am in constant expectation of fresh humiliations."

"As Sir Will'um says: 'Tis a damned world, however you look at it,'" said Emma in cheerful agreement.

"God knows what trials I shall yet have to bear. My daughter blames the Emperor of Russia for indisposition towards Austria

which may drive her husband into premature peace with France; then the rights of Italy would be the last object of concern. She urges me to make her a visit in order to watch the interests of her father and brother. Such a plan commends itself on other grounds. Christina, Maria-Amélie and Antoinetta are ready for marriage, but where are suitable husbands to be found unless their sister, the Empress, assists destiny? "

"If Your Majesty considers going by way of Leghorn, we might all travel together in a British man-of-war."

"Miledi, you raise my spirits and my hopes! Dear, dear Emma, preserve your attachment for me! "

"Always you will be my Queen of Hearts," Emma fervently responded.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

NELSON'S letters gave accounts of heart attacks, fever and general debility which called for nursing and attention only to be found at Palazzo Palagonia. Announcements of a speedy return kept Emma on tenterhooks until the middle of March, when she awakened one morning to see the *Foudroyant* at anchor in the roadstead. Nelson came ashore to breakfast.

"I shall rest quiet for two weeks, then judge by my feelings whether I am able to serve well and with comfort to myself. It is said the combined fleet is coming up the Mediterranean, confiding it can escape as it did last year; but the pitcher never goes often to the well but it comes home broke at last. They had better be damned than come, for Lord Keith owes them a grudge which I trust I shall assist him in paying."

Sir William surveyed Nelson over the rims of his spectacles. "Emma and I ardently hoped you had determined to journey home with us."

"If I can I will. Are your plans in any way settled?"

"I haven't yet received my recedential letters, nor has there been the slightest word from Mr. Paget, though Emma has it from the Queen that he was in Vienna on the 12th of February."

"What a scene she and I had with the King over it!" said Emma. "For I must tell you that Her Majesty suspects Ferdinando and the General of plotting for Sir Will'um's recall, because we are on her side and opposed to the dilly-dally ways prevailing at this Court. One day when I was at the palace she accused the King in my presence; I supported her, then there was a hullabaloo! He swore, stamped, pulled his hair, said I treated him contemptuously, and threatened to throw me out of the window."

"Devil take him!" cried Nelson. "What did you do, my dearest friend?"

"I rolled up my sleeves," said Emma, with action suiting the words, "and told him to try."

Sir William chuckled. "But he did not accept the invitation; instead I got a furious letter accusing Em of ruining his married life, and it required all my *savoir-faire* to smooth matters."

"I'd like to knock him down, King or no King!"

"It has all passed over and we take no notice—'tis the best way," said Emma, "but 'twill soon be an open rupture between him and the Queen. She sees no alternative but to visit the Empress in Vienna, taking the Princesses with her."

"Is such a project feasible in view of the tension existing between that Court and Naples?"

"The Queen thinks she may come to an understanding when on the spot."

"A belief not shared by me," said Sir William with a yawn. "Now, my dear Nelson, tell us how you captured *Le Généreux*, which I understand was accomplished by not keeping strictly to orders!"

"It was certainly owing to my plan that she and a very large store ship carrying troops was taken. Lord Keith having information that a small squadron was bound from Toulon to Malta, remained off Valletta to intercept it, but my knowledge after seven years in these waters told me to look towards the coast of Barbary. Without signal I parted company from my Commander-in-Chief in bad weather, at my own risk and for which, if I had not succeeded, I might have been broke. The *Alexander*, *Northumberland*, *Audacious* and *Success* subsequently attached themselves to my fortune; three days later we fell in with the Frenchmen, and after a long chase took them only four miles from Sicily. *Le Généreux* struck when the *Foudroyant* fired only two shot. Rear-Admiral Perrée was killed. This makes nineteen Sail of the Line and four Admirals I have seen captured this war. Ought I to trust Dame Fortune any more?"

"She shows no disposition to forsake you," Sir William responded. "But how did Lord Keith receive ye afterwards?"

"He listened to my account of myself like a philosopher, but very unlike you. It did not, that I could perceive, cause a pleasing muscle in his face. We of the Nile are not equal to Lord Keith in his estimation, and ought to think it an honour to serve under such a clever man!"

"Where is the *Queen Charlotte* at this moment?"

"Off the coasts of Genoa and Tuscany, keeping watch on our French enemies and our Austrian allies."

During the morning Tom Allen brought ashore the Admiral's

gear, which included a milliner's box from London. Rather sheepishly Nelson presented it to Emma.

"I sent a message by Hardy asking Fanny to buy something fashionable for your acceptance. I ventured to look inside the box, and I fear it is not quite in your line, though I've no doubt 'twas chosen with the best intentions."

Expressing great delight, Emma unfolded the tissue paper and disclosed an enormous black velvet turban dotted with red and yellow beads, also a kerchief to match. On a sheet of heavily scented note-paper dated: 54, St. James's Street, December 29th, 1799, Lady Nelson had written:

"My Husband tells me you would be gratified to receive something, therefore I send your ladyship a cap and kerchief *such* as are worn this *cold weather*. Snow and east winds prevail; I am clothed in two suits of flannel, and I hope I shall be the better for it, but I find myself only *comfortable* in bed when enclosed in moreen."

Smiling roguishly, Emma balanced the hearse-like headdress on her curls and wrapped the velvet square across the bosom of her muslin gown. Then she turned to Nelson.

"Shall I wear these at the next *gala* at the Opera, to show what London fashions are like?" Suddenly she squinted and pulled a face so comical that Nelson was obliged to laugh. "This hat puts me in mind of one worn by an old gamma who sold cold porridge in Covent Garden. My God! what a sight she was! Her eyes looked two ways for Sunday."

"Throw the things away; I won't have your beauty spoilt."

"Don't you like me in them?" Emma asked in surprised tones. "And they are the high kick of fashion; but if you don't think I can carry them off I'll give them to Miranda de Douro, the old negress who collects *grano* and *piccioli* for holy charity. She loves plush and velvet, even on the hottest day. But what shall I say to Lady Nelson?"

"Anything you please; 'twas a discourtesy to send a beautiful woman such trappings, and so I shall tell Fanny."

Emma smiled. "Do not, Nelson; she meant kindly by giving what she would wear herself!"

Two days after his arrival Nelson alarmed the household by a severe heart attack. Hot stupes, rubbing and packs of baked salt were tried, but he got no relief until Mr. Jefferson administered a dose of opium.

"I fear my career of service is at an end," Nelson said in a spent voice, "unless the French fleet shall come into the Mediterranean, when nothing shall prevent my dying at my post."

Bowing to Sir William's insistence, he lay on the *loggia* and allowed his friends to deal with his correspondence. From his couch he watched the *Foudroyant*, under the command of Sir Edward Berry, sail for Malta.

"She returns in mid-April, by which time I hope some decisive turn will take place in my complaint. Our friend Ball is most anxious that you and Sir William should pay him a visit, and I think a cruise might be an agreeable prelude to a journey to England, whether we go in company or whether I am condemned to stay behind. My dearest friend, if I broach the matter, will you give me your support?"

"There'll be no need," Emma answered. "Sir Will'um dotes on the sea and will need no persuasion; as for me, you know what I feel! Fancy! I thought all gaiety at an end with the advent of the hateful Paget, and now comes this opportunity. We'll make up a little party; but who shall we invite? Cornelia Knight for one. Captain Ball said only in his last letter how much he would like to see her wedded to Captain Gould because 'he had money enough for both, and she abilities'. 'Twas Lady Knight's wish too, so we'll do what we can to aid Cupid. Then we might take with us your first Lieutenant's wife, Mrs. Thomson. She's a sweet creature and so young, and begged me to thank your Lordship kindly for sending her husband in charge of *Le Généreux* to Syracuse, because it may lead to promotion."

"I've recommended him, but am not hopeful, as I could not spare Thomson for long. In any case Tyson is appointed Prize Agent and takes *Le Généreux* to Mahon."

"You needn't tell me *that* when I'm doing Tyson's share of writing as well as my own!"

"I impose on you," Nelson lamented; "it seems I cannot do without you in any way."

"That is what I wish," said Emma candidly; "then I need have no fear that you will ever leave me!"

Nelson's convalescence was retarded by news of the loss by fire of the *Queen Charlotte* on the 17th of March.

"Apparently his Lordship was at Leghorn while his flagship reconnoitred the Island of Cabrera. Early in the morning she was discovered to be in flames; gallant efforts to save the ship were vain, and I fear the loss of life is heavy."

"Our crack ship," mourned Sir William. "We have not so many of 110-guns that we can afford the calamity."

"No, indeed; without her our strength in these waters is most seriously reduced."

Nelson's spirits had not recovered from the shock when he was thrown into fresh fever by dispatches from Constantinople. He at once sought Sir William and Emma.

"The French treaty for quitting Egypt is ratified by the Porte, and it appears the intention of the Turkish Government to transport the enemy in their own men-of-war, or to use them to convoy the troops to ports in France. The Captain Pasha requests that I shall afford safe passage to the French army returning with their stores, artillery, baggage, warships and transports from Alexandral!"

"Preposterous!" said Sir William. "Such a request from a power acknowledgedly in a state of the closest alliance with Britain can only be looked upon as a very suspicious act of friendship. What action do ye propose taking?"

"In my present situation in the King's fleet, I have only to obey; had I been, as before, in command, I should have gone one short and direct way to avert this great evil by sending letters to the French and to the Grand Vizier in Egypt stating that I would not permit a single Frenchman to quit Egypt. I would do it even at the risk of creating coldness with the Turks—of two evils, choose the least!"

"But circumstanced as we are, will ye permit the enemy to return to his confederates?"

"Damme no! I shall order every ship under my command to arrest and bring into port all vessels and troops returning, under this infamous treaty, to France. Obviously I can do nothing more than bring them into port; thereafter General Acton must deal with the matter. If the troops are kept on board ship, fever will make such ravages as to be little short of the plague."

Sir William sat down and drew paper and ink towards him. As he cut a new pen he said: "It is most provoking that this should happen when both you and I, my dear Nelson, are being forced to take back seats. I confess it would be more to my satisfaction if my successor had to deal with this matter, which promises to be full of vexation."

The Honourable Arthur Paget reached Palermo in a packet-boat from Naples shortly after the brig that brought an account of the capture of *Le Guillaume Tell*. The arriving Envoy was ushered into

a room crowded with excited people toasting in champagne the officers and men of the *Foudroyant*, coupled with the name of Captain Blackwood of the frigate *Penelope*. No one took any notice of the new arrival, and he stood angry and embarrassed in the doorway while Nelson and Sir William assisted Emma to mount to the marble top of a high table. Somewhere in the background Miss Knight played the opening bars of the National Anthem as introduction to two new stanzas commemorating the latest victories. The new Minister, already unfavourably disposed towards the famous beauty, found his worst expectations confirmed, and as her voice rang out he winced in a manner intended to be noticed.

Oblivious of critics, Emma blithely sang:

*"Lord, thou hast heard our vows!
Fresh laurels deck the brows
Of him we sing,
Nelson has laid full low
Once more the Gallic foe;
Come let our bumpers flow
To George our King."*

Mrs. Cadogan, who had followed Mr. Paget, nudged him with her elbow. "Miss Knight wrote that verse to mark the capture of *Le Généreaux*, the one my Emma is going on to celebrate the latest victory over the *William Tell*. Cornelia is wonderfully clever, and the officers of the fleet call her 'Nelson's poet-laureate'."

Mr. Paget looked down over his shoulder at the conversational Welshwoman. She wore a tight black lace gown over green silk and for the occasion had speared her fading red hair with small Union Jacks which stuck out at strange angles. Raising his eyebrows, he said, "Indeed", and moved off as far as the crowd permitted.

Applause having died down, Emma sang the latest and last stanza.

*"When thus we chant his praise,
See what new glories blaze,
New laurels spring!
Nelson! thy task's complete;
All their Egyptian fleet
Bows at thy conqu'ring feet
To George our King!"*

Mr. Paget's inclination was to quit the vulgar scene, but he had no lodging and was full of anxious care for his luggage, piled unattended on the mole for any rascal to steal. The young man savagely wondered if a British Minister had ever before been accorded so little respect. As he dwelt on his ignominious situation his heavy brows met in a black frown and his bearing became increasingly haughty.

Mrs. Cadogan, feeling compassion for the uneasy stranger, returned to his side with unimpaired geniality. "Don't know anybody here, do you? But that's soon remedied, we're one big happy family. Liberty Hall I call it, but Sir Will'um says we keep John Bull's hotel, and blames my gal for attracting guests who don't fatten the landlord. But take no notice of the Ambassador; we'll find you a bed if you are waiting for a ship, for there's only one inn at Palermo, so full of fleas and lice there's hardly room for a Christian to sleep. But I'll call my daughter. Emma! Emma! Here's a stranger, doesn't know his way about—I've told him he's come to John Bull's hotel!"

Emma seemed to float towards the guest, a vision of voluptuous beauty, flushed and gay from the plaudits of admirers. It was a hot day, and above the scent of bergamot emanating from scarves and draperies Mr. Paget's fastidious nose detected the odour of a healthy, warm body.

Taking his hand and grasping his sleeve with familiar affability, she smiled into his face. "Sir Will'um will be pleased you've found your way, and we'll do all we can to make your stay comfortable and agreeable. God knows there's little amusement in Palermo, nor much to be seen either—the opera is so-so and the assembly rooms little better. But there's *rouge et noir* and *faro* for gamblers and good wine for tipplers. Come with me and I'll introduce you to Sir Will'um Hamilton, the doyen of the diplomats at this Court and the best husband on earth!" Still grasping the guest's sleeve, Emma laughingly pushed her way through the crowd, oblivious of his anger.

After a sharp glance, Sir William greeted him suavely. "You are Mr. Arthur Paget, I presume, just arrived in the packet from Naples after a vastly uncomfortable voyage? Wretched vessels are employed and sailings are erratic, being dependent on other services. I hope ye hadn't long to wait?"

"A week," Mr. Paget grimly returned. "I was informed that the boat was deflected from her usual service in order to convey from Civita Vecchia a collection of paintings and statues sent by the Neapolitans from Rome, to the great annoyance of the Romans!"

"Really?" the aged diplomat responded in elaborately casual tones. "Plunder is the invariable accompaniment of wars. Where are ye established? I fear this place is extremely crowded and all good apartments have long since gone."

Mr. Paget's face grew darker and darker. "Lady Hamilton offered me hospitality, and I must accept it until I find a house suitable for my Legation. I must also put you to the trouble of sending for my boxes, now lying on the quay at the mercy of any thief."

"Your goods shall be collected by all means, but ye can rely on an Englishman's property being respected, due to the gratitude felt by all Sicilians to Lord Nelson and the British Fleet."

Mr. Paget was given a suite of apartments at the back of the palazzo, overlooking the city and encircling mountains. The rooms were spacious and richly furnished, but permeated by smells drifting from the narrow, filthy streets.

"Let him make the best of it," said Sir William; "it is no part of my duty to provide my successor with board and lodging. Paget is a most supercilious fellow, and very impatient for me to present my recredential letters in order to step into my shoes. I told him fairly I should wait until it was convenient to myself, as I would not remain here as a private individual after my long official service."

"How did he answer?" Nelson inquired.

"That he only wished to comply with the rules giving him authority to conduct the Ministerial business with which he was charged. I answered that I couldn't be guided by what he said *en l'air*, and to alter my purpose I must be shown his instructions—this he declined to do."

"Nobody at Court wishes to see him," Emma said with satisfaction, "and the Queen is determined that Paget is only an acting Envoy during your absence on leave."

"Nothing will induce me to serve again unless a sort of second Minister is sent to do business and represent—but that can wait for the future. Thank God I have reduced my affairs to some kind of order and I can set forth with an easy mind for our pleasure cruise to Malta. The moment the *Foudroyant* arrives, Mr. Paget can present his letters and welcome."

Emma happily reviewed the situation: "All has gone according to plan, and our Lord Thunder decorates his brows with the last wreath of laurel."

"Aye, thanks to my brave friends my orders from the great Earl of St. Vincent are fulfilled and the Egyptian fleet finished. My task is done, my health lost, and I have wrote to Lord Keith for my retreat. In a few days I hope we shall be sailing together for Malta, thence, if my Commander-in-Chief permits, to Gibraltar or England."

The *Foudroyant* arrived at Palermo on the 21st of April, and on the 24th sailed again with Sir William, Emma, Miss Knight and Mrs. Thomson on board. Mrs. Cadogan stayed behind making final preparations for the journey home.

"I wish Mam had come with us," said Emma on the first night at sea, "but it was put out of her power when the Queen asked her as a special favour to pack all the jewels and court gowns Her Majesty and the Princesses are taking with them to Vienna. My God, how I shall miss my dear Maria Carolina, my Queen of Queens! Indeed, I feel my heart will be quite broke by the changes and losses that are coming upon me all at once. But there is one bright gleam amid the clouds—Her Majesty has cleverly managed that Prince Castelvicala is to succeed Circello as Minister to St. James's. Castelvicala will travel with us to England, and the Queen has charged him to secure Sir Will'um's re-appointment as Envoy to the Sicilies. Don't you call that diplomacy? In future my Lord Thunder's headquarters will be Bronte, and we shall exchange visits to our heart's content, and, as the fairy tales say, 'live happy ever after'."

"A fairy tale indeed, m'dear," Sir William responded. "The Queen has certainly shown skill in securing a coveted post for her favourite, but ye will find her other intention miscarry."

"No, because the King and General Acton will find they can't get on without you, Sir Will'um!"

"My taking leave at Court yesterday was certainly a moving scene," he admitted with emotion. "The only jarring note was struck by Mr. Paget. I certainly tried to be friendly and open to him, but his behaviour to me was cold and reserved from the moment of his arrival. He asked no questions relative to the Court or country, which I must certainly know more of than he can, having been Minister at Naples before he was born."

Emma answered: "Though he only presented his credential letters in the morning, he had made trouble by the afternoon. At his first interview with Sir John he began pressing for the King's return to his throne of Naples, and though the General admitted it to be desirable, he greatly resented such intrusion from a young and inexperienced

Minister. Mr. Paget went so far as to say that it was the Austrian Emperor's wish to see His Sicilian Majesty again at Naples! "

"A *faux pas*, if ever there was one!" Sir William said with satisfaction.

It was perfect weather for a cruise. The sky was clear and the sun hot, a light following breeze drove the *Foudroyant* smoothly through the water. At nightfall Lord Nelson ensured repose for his guests by ordering the ship to be run off before the wind and her yards braced. Lanterns were hung from the rigging, and Emma's harp was carried to the top of the quarter-deck ladder in order that she might be seen from below in a stage-like setting. As the ship gently rocked in the starlit night, Emma sang to the ship's company sitting closely packed in the waist and to the officers leaning against the bulwarks, shadowy forms whose shapely white legs and silver buckles slashed the darkness.

On Sunday morning Sir William read the Lessons, and in the afternoon he lectured on Vesuvius and the discoveries made at Pompeii, but despite these diversions Emma's spirits sank. Divorced from her usual activities she had leisure to look into the future, and it presented a bleak and uncertain prospect. She abandoned pretence and accepted the hard fact that Sir William would not return as Envoy to Naples. The Sicilian stage would never again be set for Emma Hamilton, no royal doors would open, no Queen would ask for sympathy and advice. All was slipping away, receding into the past as surely as the crested waves raced to the horizon.

Towards evening her despondency was noticed, and she was rallied as a bad sailor, until tears were seen to spangle her lashes.

"How can you tease me when you must know my heart is almost broke? The end is near of all that I love; you have been kind enough to call me the patroness of the British navy, and I was proud. Alas! when I leave this ship my reign is over—never again shall I share your glories. I may read of them in cold print and pray for splendid victories, but that is all. Oh, God, why cannot this moment last for ever? "

To Nelson she was more explicit as she lay that night in the crook of his arm. "I can say farewell to grandeur, to palaces, even to my beloved Queen, but I cannot bear the fear that I may be thrust from you, my dearest love, my more than life. If aught should come between us I give you solemn warning *Emma will be no more.*"

"Nothing, nothing shall part us," Nelson returned, in an ecstasy of

passion. "A fine thread will lead me, but with my life I would resist a cable from dragging me. My heart is yours for ever; only place confidence in me, and you never shall be disappointed. My dearest, dry your eyes and put all doubts and fears from your mind, for my love will last as long as life, and never can be satisfied."

The visit to Malta, which was originally planned to cover no more than fourteen days, finally extended from the 24th of April to the 1st of June. The island supplied everyone with congenial entertainment, but if any persuasion had been required to prolong the cruise, Sir Thomas Troubridge and Captain Ball supplied it. Both urged Nelson to remain, deeming the fall of Valletta to be imminent.

"Typhus is raging and food must be exhausted," said Captain Ball; if no more vessels get in Vaubois will be forced to surrender."

Sir Thomas added: "You, My Lord, should stay to gather the last sprig of laurel, as the prospects are at last good for reducing this place." Lying on a balcony at Palazzo Leoni, the Commodore looked gaunt, yellow and irritable after a protracted attack of jaundice.

Nelson, Sir William and Emma were at the headquarters of the British and Maltese forces besieging the French garrison in La Vallette. Palazzo Leoni, once the country villa of Grand Master Vilhena, stood on high ground behind the fortified city of the Knights of Jerusalem, rising in serrated battlements cut in the rocky peninsula that separated the Grand Harbour from the blue waters of Marsamuscetto. The visitors were provided with spy glasses and, to explain the panorama, Captain Ball drew a chalk map on the black marble pavement showing the forts of Sant' Elmo, Lascaris, Ricasoli, Sant' Angelo and San Michele and the four deep water-creeks off the Grand Harbour, all in French possession. Now and again a shot rang out and a swathe of smoke curled above the bastions, to be answered by British cannon concealed behind stone walls that rimmed terraced fields of crimson sullen. The brilliant colours of Spring crops, the vivid blue of sea and sky, the glare from limestone walls and buildings were too much for Nelson's eye. Producing a handkerchief, Emma compassionately dabbed the tears that streamed down his cheeks.

"And you've lost the green shade I tucked inside your hat, so now you'll get one of your headaches. I declare you each need a nurse to keep you in order. Captain Ball is as thin as a pair of stilts, and as for Sir Thomas, he looks no different from a tarnished guinea!"

"I assure you I don't feel so bright, though the jaundice has left

me something of the same colour," the Commodore said, with a dreary laugh. "I shall return to my country with a broken constitution and a purse much lighter for serving the King of Naples."

"I wrote telling you that the Queen recognises what the Neapolitan Government owes to you, and of her inquiry if you would accept a pension."

"You must excuse me, I trust nothing there, nor do I or ever shall I ask the Court of Naples for anything but the just demands I have on them. The whole time I have been employed on their cause I have kept people to procure information and rewarded many agreeable to the Queen's direction, but they never offered to repay. I have paid from my private purse the feed of all the horses, a public table, wood, cart-hire, spies and a thousand other things. I shall never forget or forgive them for their ill-treatment and for the intrigues they tried to practice on me while I was serving them, and serving them well."

Emma looked nettled. "I know everything is going to be made up to British officers who have laboured in the great cause, and 'twill be done before Queen Carolina leaves for Vienna."

Sir Thomas refused to be mollified. "I have been so long here and seen so much of the Neapolitan Government, that I well know they have no intention of doing anything!"

Looking at Emma's flushed face, Sir William deemed it time to intervene. "Well, my dear Sir, ye will soon be back in English waters, serving our good King, who never proves ungrateful. Lord Nelson says you are appointed Captain of the Fleet to Earl St. Vincent."

"Yes, thank God!" Turning to Nelson, Troubridge wistfully asked: "Am I to have the honour of carrying you home in the *Culloden*?"

"I have fixed your passage in the *Princess Charlotte*; I could never let the *Culloden* go to sea without first being hove down, though I know you who are full of resource would find a means to make her swim even if her bottom were entirely out. We must sail in the *Foudroyant*, as I am under an old promise to Her Sicilian Majesty that whenever she returned to the Continent I would escort her over. Her Majesty has now made application to me to carry her to Leghorn as soon as possible. As she travels with an immense retinue, I propose taking the *Alexander* with me as escort."

"That rather reduces Ball's force here!"

"He will have the *Northumberland*, *Lion*, *Audacious* and *Culloden* and no French ships to oppose them!"

Nelson, Emma and Sir William had to take an early departure in order to rejoin the flagship before nightfall. The *Foudroyant* was anchored in Marsa Scirocco, a land-locked bay in the south of the island, reached by narrow lanes more like water-courses than roads. To negotiate these stony tracks a traveller rode on a flat cart, clinging as best he could to a slatted wooden frame attached to a pair of large wheels. A thin, tall ass supplied locomotion and a Maltese with a barbed whip the incentive.

Emma, who had a secret reason for self-indulgence, jealously eyed Sir William's mattress, strapped to the slanting rack.

"You might let me ride in your cart going back, for I declare after an hour's jolting on bare slats one is as much tortured as ever St. Laurence was on his gridiron."

"Ye should have thought of that before," said Sir William, gingerly scrambling on to the vehicle. "You scoffed at my warning, and so did our friend Nelson; now ye can both suffer for your arrogance."

"Tis different going back—there's two of us in one cart, and now we've got this puppy dog that Captain Ball has given to me. I shall have to hold him in my arms, yet I require both hands to keep myself perched."

"My dear Em, that is your misfortune, not mine! I refuse to be robbed of the benefits of my foresight; as for the Maltese terrier, I regret that you accepted it, though I own it is something of a curiosity."

"Nilo a curiosity?" Emma cried indignantly as she kissed the tiny creature. "I vow he's the sweetest thing I ever saw, so warm, white and fluffy. What a pretty toy you'd make for a baby, my dear little Nilo!"

"Then give it to Mrs. Thomson, who is breeding," said Sir William testily. "To return to England in company with a month-old puppy is more than I care to contemplate."

"You old churl!" Emma rallied in tones not entirely playful.

Sir William was the first away, an ancient, gaunt, elegantly dressed figure spread-eagled and grimly clinging to a wooden bar. When he had vanished in a cloud of dust and flying stones, Emma and Nelson climbed upon their own vehicle.

"The glare from the limestone cuts through my head," he groaned. "I shall sit on the edge of this damned tumbril, where at least one avoids being caught in the wheels."

"You will fall out for certain; Captain Ball, who travels all over

the island on these racks, says the comfortable place is perched by the driver, who is pleased enough to have a passenger alongside, as then there is no chance of the devil taking the empty seat. You go. Nilo and I will have more room, and I feel so sick I want to lie flat as I can."

Nelson was all concern. "'Tis the bird we had for dinner—Ball said it had been hanging for a fortnight, a rare treat kept for our visit. 'Twas putrid—one cannot treat a barn-yard cock as game fowl. I'll try to get you a drop of something from one of the monasteries."

"I'd rather get back to the ship as quick as we can. It wasn't the chicken that upset me, either, because I ate none."

"Then what is it, my dearest friend?—you must know that everything which concerns you is of interest to me."

"Don't ask me now, for I shall have to tell you soon enough."

In ordinary circumstances Emma would have been enchanted by a novel drive in a strange island. But she was tormented in body and mind. As the springless cart lurched and bumped, each probing slat bit into her shrinking flesh. What a fool she'd been to come, when for the last fortnight there'd been no doubt of her state! . . . Eighteen years seemed to have been swept away, and she was again Emy Lyon, feeling like death and looking fearfully into the future. . . . Yet how different was the position! . . . A poor serving-wench bearing a gentleman's bastard had little in common with Lady Hamilton carrying the child of the greatest hero on earth. . . .

Nelson, from his perch beside the driver, turned to inquire how she did. "And I hope you can tell me you feel a little better, for I am quite miserable imagining how each jolt is afflicting you."

"Yet my thoughts are for your poor head," Emma lied. "Thank God the sun is sinking, because the glare from all this bleached stone hurts even my eyes, which are strong as an eagle's. Poor Nelson! but when we get back to the ship I will settle and comfort you."

"Aye, I think of that and nothing else. These are happy times, days of ease and nights of pleasure. The memory will comfort me when we are parted."

Emma's heart sank yet lower. "Must we separate? I've told you I shall not bear it!"

"I vowed no *person* should come between us; but I suspect that our country has not done with Nelson, and may yet call him from your dear, dear arms. You would not try to keep him?"

"Never! Nelson's glory is my glory."

The road they traversed had become smoother, and reassurance had put her mind more at ease. For the first time she noticed the scenery, a combination of barren rock and luxuriant fertility rendered strangely Biblical of aspect by flat-roofed, box-like farms and big churches crowned with eastern-looking cupolas uprising in lonely grandeur amid terraced fields. Barefooted women enveloped in black cloaks attached to stiff, scoop-shaped headdresses drove scrawny goats from village to village; mendicant friars in faded brown habits sat begging at wayside shrines; now and again a group of youths passed singing in Maltese a hymn in praise of Captain Ball. Noticing the British uniform, they stopped and clapped while the cart rattled by: Nelson turned and waved the stump of his arm.

"Poor devils!" he said compassionately; "they look half-starved, and I fancy the cries of hunger in my ears. But it must end soon; with more troops a week will finish it. If I were General Graham I should attack now, but he fears a sortie. Our difficulties will not be over when General Vaubois capitulates. Malta must never belong to France; England does not want it, but how can a State so weak as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies keep it out of the power of so powerful a one as France?"

Faintness was once more descending on Emma. She had difficulty to keep her hold on Nilo and her grip on the cart, but she managed to say: "I thought the Emperor of Russia wanted to re-establish the Order, and he is rich enough, in all conscience."

"At present the Grand Master appears to reject the rock of Malta—in the end we may have no choice but to keep the island."

"I think we should, seeing that the Maltese themselves have often enough pleaded to be British subjects."

"And as often Sir William and I have refused, knowing that no view of individual aggrandizement actuates our gracious Sovereign, but when . . ."

His voice was drowned by the throb of Emma's own heart. She no longer saw the walled fields mounting in steps of crimson sulla, nor the carab and olive trees growing by the roadside. The blue sky grew dark, her fingers relaxed, and with a moan she slipped down the cart and fell with Nilo upon the stony track.

She came round to find herself looking up into Nelson's anxious face. His hat, filled with water, was gripped between his knees, an improvised font from which he dashed water with thoroughness born of fear.

"I'm half drowned," Emma tearfully protested.

"Oh, thank God! thank God!" he cried, casting aside his hat "I began to think you had gone from me, to join your sisters in heaven, my Sant' Emma. Tell me, what ails you, my love?"

She would not look up. Her eyes followed her fingers, twisting the gilt buttons on his coat. "I fear to tell—for I don't know how you will take it. Yet I must . . . Nelson, dear Nelson, I'm going to be a mother, and you will be my baby's father."

She felt his supporting arm tighten, but he did not speak. Presently a tear fell on her hand. With a quick gesture she pulled down his head to rest against her shoulder.

"My dearest, dearest Nelson, do you care so much?"

"How can you ask?" he said in tones broken by emotion. "I love, and never did love, anyone but you. I never did have a dear pledge of love till you gave me one, and you, thank my God, never gave one to anybody else. Emma, there is nothing in this world that I will not do for us to live together, and to have our dear little child with us."

"I am grateful, indeed I am, that you feel as you do. I was frightened lest you might accuse me of not managing in a clever way. But in future we'll have to be prudent, and not let anyone guess. For it might spell your ruin, and I should certainly be undone. Somehow we must keep our secret to ourselves." Scrambling to her knees, she laughed ruefully. "Why, oh why, have hoops gone out of fashion? Then one could carry twins in one's belly, and no one be the wiser!"

They lingered, caressing each other, but speaking little. The sun had set and the light was fading. Presently Emma shivered and glanced fearfully into the blue twilight.

"What place is this? It looks like the courtyard of a deserted house—vines grow up the window grilles and weeds poke their way between the flagstones."

"I imagine this was the priory of the English language, because over the door are the words: 'Il venerando Priore d'Inghilterra', and a Coat of Arms effaced by the damned French."

Supported by Nelson, Emma slowly walked to the road. They were within quarter of a mile of Cala San Giorgio; the small bay was studded with high-prowed boats hopefully waiting to convey passengers to the British men-of-war. Sir William could be seen halfway from the shore, rowed by two boatmen standing to their oars.

"He might have waited," said Emma aggrieved. "Fancy not thinking that something was amiss!"

She declined to ride again, and, after paying the fare, they watched the cart until it disappeared.

"We must go carefully," said Nelson. "I wish I could carry Nilo—what it is to be a one-armed man!"

They reached the *Foudroyant* more than an hour after Sir William. He gave Emma and Nelson a sharp look, but quickly lowered his eyes to the paper in his hand.

"There is a letter for you from the Queen, Em, and I have one here from Sir John, who says three Companies of British from Messina are coming to Malta, which is satisfactory, as it will finish the French. Ruffo has arrived at Ancona, in much dudgeon because Cardinal Chiaromonte has secured the tiara with the title of Pius VII. The remaining news from Palermo is disquieting. Austrians have entered the Principality of Piombino, which is a detached State belonging to the Crown of the Two Sicilies, and an Austrian General and two other officers are said to be in disguise in Naples. All this makes Her Majesty the more anxious to set forth immediately, in a belief that she can produce a change in the disposition of the German Emperor. The General opposes the journey on grounds of expense and because he thinks she will do more harm than good. He says that matters have come to a complete rupture between the King and Queen, and they now never speak amiably together save in public. Acton ends by telling me that he has got Mary Anne with child."

Nelson laughed. "It is never too late to do well—he is only sixty-four!"

Observing Sir William's expression, Emma hastily inquired: "Does the General mention the odious Paget?"

"Yes, the young man appears to be acting in a very undiplomatic manner by pointing out the consequences if His Majesty does not shoulder his responsibilities. Nothing is ever gained by alarming the King, and so I could have told Mr. Paget had he evinced any wish for advice. However, it is no concern of mine, and if the new Envoy chooses to antagonize the Court, he alone will be the sufferer."

Opening her letter, Emma quickly scanned Maria Carolina's neat writing. "The Queen tells of great preparations against our return. His Majesty has founded a new Order named *San Ferdinando e Merito* expressly for the Duke of Bronte, because Protestants cannot be admitted into the existing Order of *San Gennaro*. Milord Nelson, Field-Marshal Suvárov and the Emperor Paul become Knights of

the Grand Cross; Hood, Louis and Hallowell Knight Commanders. Ball and Troubridge also, but these two are singled out for further rewards; Ball receives a present of a thousand ounces and Troubridge a yearly pension of the same sum. If that is not generous I don't know what is! Sir Thomas must feel ashamed when he recalls the hard things he has said of Their Majesties? "

"We're treated handsomely indeed," said Nelson, flushed with pleasure.

"Another star for your coat; soon you will be so a-glitter with diamonds that we shall be too dazzled to look at you!" Emma rallied in a teasing voice. "Your decoration is already a-making, also two statues of the Order; all will be presented at a state ceremony when we reach Palermo. Her Majesty urges our speedy return; both the political situation and her unhappy domestic affairs turn her thoughts to Vienna. Her movements hinge on us!"

"The wind is favourable and we can sail this night, but I confess reluctance to terminate these halcyon days. What is your wish, Sir William?"

"Were I younger I should be averse to leave half explored the unique antiquities of this island; but I wax old, and prudently wish to enjoy as much of the English summer as I can, to prepare me for the bitter blasts of winter."

Nelson sighed. "Then I'll tell Sir Ed'ard to hoist the Blue Peter."

His depression quickly passed, and all on board remarked on his high spirits. In contrast Emma's melancholy was the more pronounced. Ascribing her sorrowful demeanour to the severing of old ties, great efforts were made to distract her thoughts. Those who could sing did so, and Cornelia Knight, in her capacity as Naval poet laureate, composed a new version of Hearts of Oak which found favour with the genial sea officers. To Sir William's accompaniment on the viola they shouted until the ship vibrated:

*"Come, cheer up, fair Emma, forget all thy grief,
For thy shipmates are brave, and a hero's their chief;
Look round on these trophies, the pride of the Main,
They were snatched by their valour from Gallia and Spain."*

Despite the gallant efforts to entertain, Emma remained subdued.

"It is strange that you don't rejoice as I do," her lover said wistfully. "I think of nothing else but our dear little child."

"We've a long time before we get it," she retorted. "Can't you picture my troubles and difficulties? For months I must act a part. However ill I feel, no one must guess. 'Tis very different for a woman in Mrs. Thomson's position; when *she* feels sick and faint she can retire, but when I feel like to die I must listen to 'Cheer up, fair Emma', and smile and laugh. Oh, God, why am I so persecuted?"

Nelson looked sheepish and apologetic. "'Tis all meant kindly, because we want you to be happy!"

"I know that! To amuse me Cornelia stifles her disappointment over Captain Gould, yet if she but knew it I would far rather mope with her in a corner. Just God, why must I always be ashamed, when other women in like condition are revered?"

"My dear, dear wife—for so you are in the sight of heaven—how can you accuse me when I go on my knees and kiss your shoes in worship?"

Emma gazed down on him, an expression of mingled love and exasperation on her face. "'Tis because you are my husband *only* in the sight of heaven that I'm in this plight. Can't you understand?" she demanded, stamping her foot. "Haven't you thought of the dangers ahead—you who foresee every hazard of battle? Do you suppose I don't know that I am surrounded by enemies, each eager to see me humbled? What chance should I have if they learnt my secret? And where would be your reputation? The great Nelson would fall from his pinnacle, and those like Sir John Orde, who jealously watched you race ahead in the battle for fame, would snigger and lick their lips, adding a sneering contribution to the babel of slanderous tongues."

"I care not; let them say what they damned well please—I care for nothing but you and the glory of my country. We will flout our enemies; to the devil with them!"

"Yes, to the devil with them," cried Emma wrathfully; "but we will not flout them, we will beat them! This is my battle, and I shall fight it to victory or death. No one shall know. I'll act, God, how I'll act! Never before will there have been such a performance, never such a triumph!"

"But how can you conceal your condition for more than a month or so? Your mother is shrewd and Sir William a man of the world."

"Sir Will'um may suspect, but if I say nothing, he will not—he will act his part like a gentleman. As for Mam, I shall tell her the moment we get back. I can't manage unless she helps. You may not

have guessed, but she is far cleverer than I. Without her advice I should not be respected as I am, nor should I have risen to be British Queen of Naples!"

"You cut me short when I try to say that I want everything to be open and above-board—I'm rejoiced that you will at least tell Mrs. Cadogan."

"Secrecy is the price you must pay to be a proud father!"

"But it hurts me to deny all that I hold in pride and reverence."

"I only ask you to be sensible! If I'm prepared to squeeze myself into tight stays for eight weary months, you should be ready to practise deception which is less painful."

The *Foudroyant* had a tedious passage from Malta. She lay becalmed for hours in the blazing sunshine while men laboured in rowing-boats to bring her head to the wind. All day she stood on and off near Palermo, but port was not made until nightfall. Lord Nelson's party slept on board, and landed for breakfast. They found Palazzo Palagonia looking bare and Mrs. Cadogan a triumphant figure surrounded by roped and labelled boxes.

"Everything's ready to go aboard," she announced, giving Nelson a hearty kiss. "All clothes are packed except gala costumes for each of us to wear at Court. Our things had better be got off as soon as convenient, so we may give our minds to the royal jewels and plate which comes here. We are to arrange everything as we did when we escaped from Naples, only this time we shan't need to be cautious. Everybody knows that the Queen and her daughters are going, and there's many who say they won't come back." Mrs. Cadogan pursed her lips. "I express no opinion, but the bickering I've witnessed between Their Majesties would make the quarrels of the *lazzaroni* civil in comparison."

On the 5th of June the *Foudroyant* and the *Alexander* were to sail with the royal party for Leghorn. The date enabled Sir William to combine a farewell banquet with loyal toasts to King George, whose birthday was the 4th day of the month. According to custom, Their Sicilian Majesties and their family individually sent letters to Sir William and Emma praying for the health and prosperity of the British monarch.

"Ye'll notice that this mark of royal attention is directed to us and not to Mr. Paget, who also celebrates the occasion with a large party," Sir William remarked with relish.

Emma felt ill, but she comported herself with her usual verve. The

last guests had gone and the household were preparing for bed when another messenger arrived from the palace with an agitated letter from the Queen postponing her departure.

Nelson was greatly provoked. "Royalty appears to imagine that movements of His Majesty's ships can as easily be regulated as a journey by coach. The Queen says an account has just come by courier of an Austrian defeat by the French at Biberach on May the 9th and a report that Buonaparte is crossing the Alps to reconquer Italy. Her Majesty wishes to await events."

"There should be no delay if the French are marching," said Sir William; "a rapid advance by the enemy would close all roads to Austria."

"Exactly! And I cannot detain two Ships of the Line which are badly needed elsewhere. I shall answer that the requirements of His Majesty's service will prevent the *Foudroyant* and *Alexander* remaining one day beyond the 8th of June. Three days' grace I consider very handsome, and it will bring censure on me from Lord Keith, who has already shown himself opposed to aiding the unfortunate Queen."

Though he spoke firmly, Nelson was unable to withstand Carolina's entreaties when her pleas had Emma's support.

"If Your Majesty means to go to Vienna, the quicker the better," he cried fretfully. "I agree that the contradictory news is agitating, but vacillation will not make a decision easier to come by. It is now the 9th of June, and I cannot keep the ships one day longer than to-morrow."

"But my choice is so cruel," sobbed Carolina. "If Buonaparte makes a swift advance over the Alps we may be captured and made prisoners on the road. Our position here is no better, for in addition to my hard lot, which I am eager to leave, Buonaparte threatens us directly. He has said: 'There is one power still in Italy to be reduced before I can give it peace.' The traitor Pignatelli accompanies him, so we know what to expect."

"I can't bear to force you to a decision, but I must. The *Foudroyant* sails to-morrow. If Your Majesty, the Princesses and Prince Leopold are not on board by ten o'clock English time, I shall have no choice but to put to sea."

"We shall be there," the Queen whimpered, "whether for good or ill rests with Providence. I care not for myself, being beyond it, but for my children I am concerned." Putting away her handkerchief,

she added in a brighter tone: "It is a relief to have the matter settled for one."

The party from Palazzo Palagonia embarked at an early hour; Sir William went immediately to his cabin to make prudent provision for comfort on the voyage. Mrs. Cadogan and Miss Knight stood in the waist searching among a pile of luggage for a lost bandbox. Nelson and Emma were alone on the poop, watching the royal family and their retinue approach in a flotilla of gaily painted galleys.

Emma's eyes travelled to the shore where white palaces gleamed beyond a green band of trees curving with the Marina. Suddenly she clutched Nelson's arm. "Look!" she said. "There are the terraces that we shall mount no more. Others will climb those stairs, and they'll know nothing of us. This is the end," she solemnly announced. "'Tis like coming to the last page of a book."

He laughed, giving her a sly glance, but became grave when he saw her dewy eyes. Taking her hand he swiftly kissed it. "Ah, but there will be another volume showing Emma in a new guise. I name it 'Guardian Angel'."

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